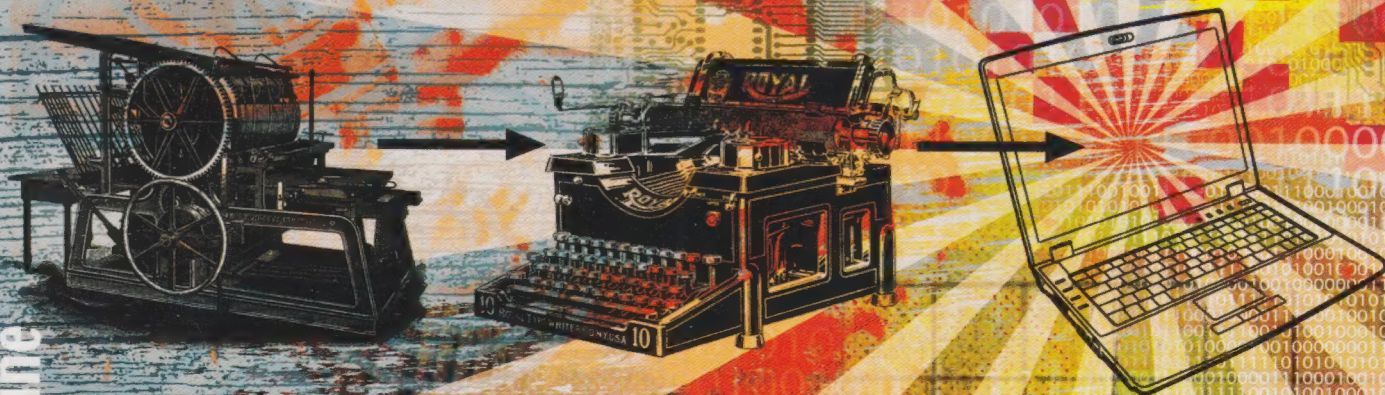


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As I Lay Dying  
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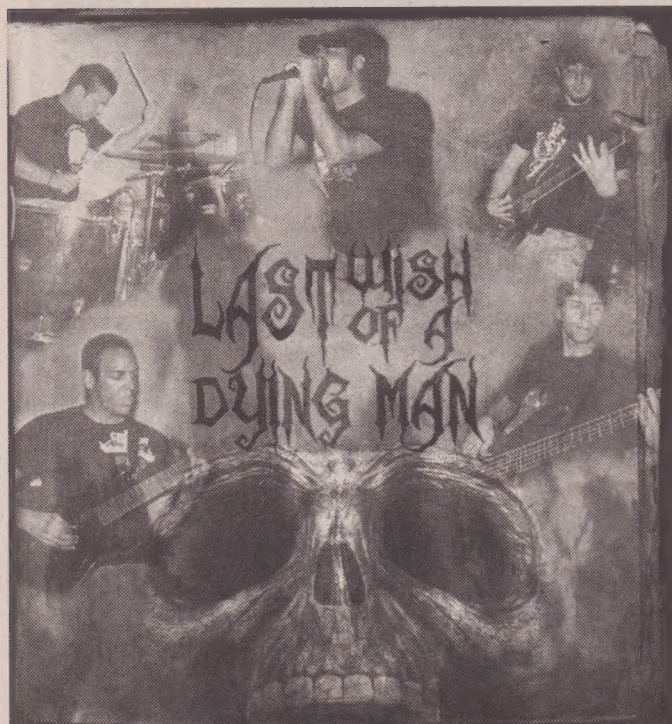
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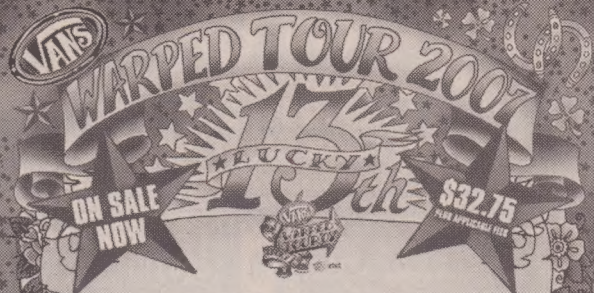


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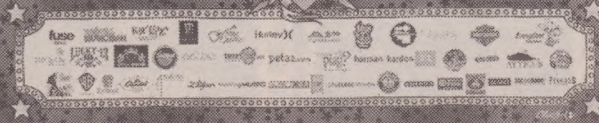
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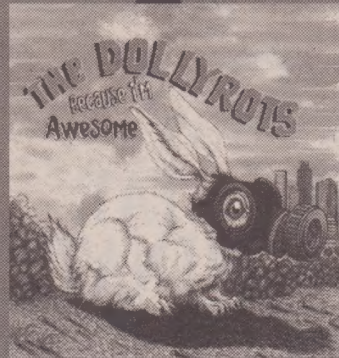
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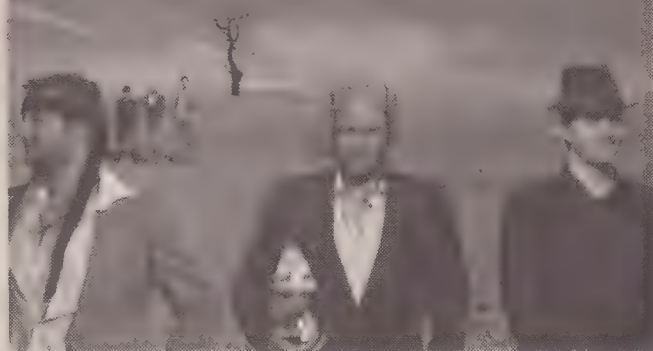
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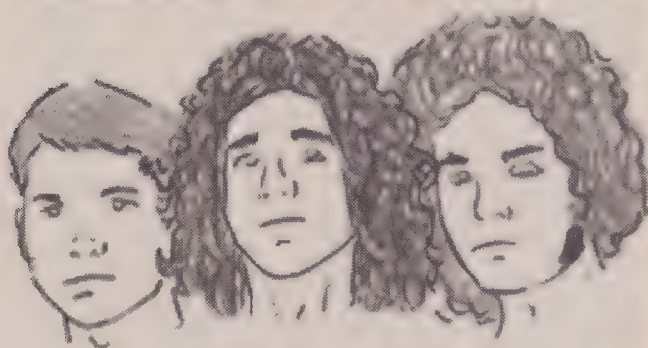
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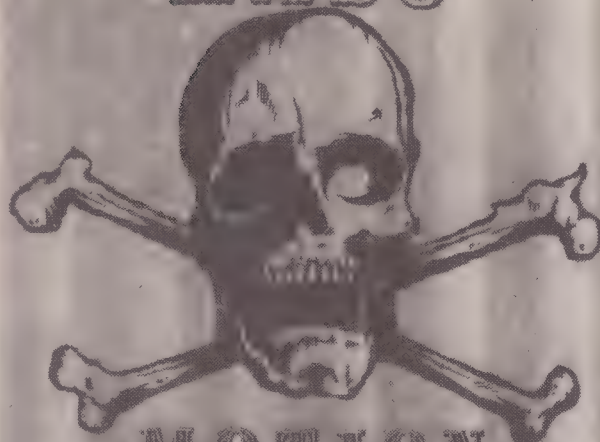
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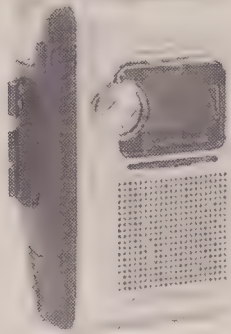
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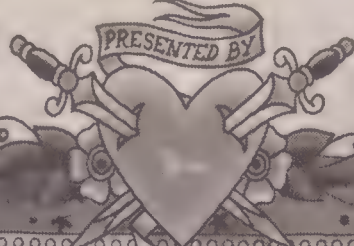


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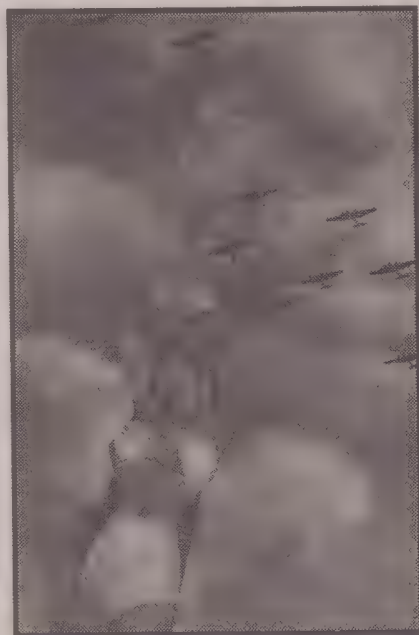


# jonathan baker

by renee a. mallett

Jonathon Baker was first inspired to do collage art by The Dead Kennedy's FRESH FRUIT FOR ROTTING VEGETABLES debut album. In time, he started his own zine, NOISE ANNOYS (later known as GREEDY PIGS). When his zine endeavor came to an end in the late '90s, Jonathon Baker set out with a focus in getting his art into other people's magazines. Since then, he has done CD covers and magazine covers for everyone from THE FREETHINKER to, yes, SKRATCH magazine.

Considering that most of his art has a political slant, it is not surprising to learn that Jonathon Baker contributed work to PEACE



SIGNS, an anti-War art book.

**SKRATCH:** Who, or what, has had the biggest influence on your art? What artists do you most admire?

**BAKER:** The Punk movement has had a big influence, especially the works of Winston Smith, Gee Vaucher and John Yates. I also love the works of Peter Kennard, John Heartfield, Gerald Scarfe and Ralph Steadman.

**SKRATCH:** Can you walk us through your creative process, from idea to finished product? Do you start with a set

idea, or look for images that spark off an idea?

**BAKER:** I'll usually sit with my old magazines and look through and see what shouldn't ordinarily be together looks good together, or makes some kind of point, unless I have something concrete in mind

**SKRATCH:** I know you've done a few CD covers, along with magazine covers, commissions, and everything else. What are some of your favorite CD covers (ones you've done or others works)? Do you find that you work differently on a CD cover, as opposed to a magazine cover, or anything else you've done?

**BAKER:** The second Endstand cover was great for me, even though I never received a copy from the label, but at least two people have had it tattooed, which, although it's more about the band than me, is still an honor. There isn't a lot of difference between creating CD and magazine covers, they both have to illustrate the broad message of what's inside.

**SKRATCH:** What about collage or montage art appeals to you? How did you get started in that particular art form?

**BAKER:** I like the immediacy of the medium, and the joy of rearranging images to what I see fit; the political opportunities are obvious.

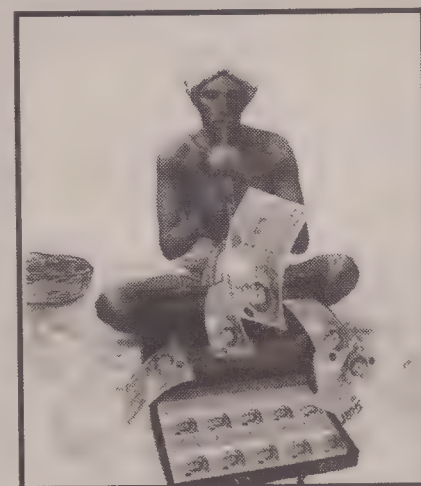
**SKRATCH:** Political and social commentary are a huge part of your art, specifically some of your pieces are a little rough on G.W. Bush. What kind of feedback do you get on the more hot button pieces? Do you find it tends to be "preaching to the already converted" or do you get a lot of dialogues going over the political pieces?

**BAKER:** I may be a little rough on Bush, but no more so than Winston Smith was on Reagan (and is on Bush I and II) or John Heartfield was on Hitler. The Bush administration is into the most bellicose policies and political corruption, it makes Nixon look honest by comparison. It could mostly be preaching to the converted, but conversion is only a part of the goal,

discussion and information sharing plays a large part too. I haven't gotten too much trouble, I was asked to alter a piece for a book, which I did because I wanted to take part, and I managed to make a different comment with the same piece, or I would have had it taken out. I have had some serious letters from the Watchtower people, so any collage artists out there, avoid using any of their magazines as source material, they have people searching the net just for that, just like major labels had people searching rap albums for James Brown Samples, its all sampling really.

**SKRATCH:** What is your favorite part about being an artist? Least favorite?

**BAKER:** I really haven't thought about it, it



has its joys and its irks.

**SKRATCH:** Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

**BAKER:** I have no idea, I should still have my Web site. I would like to have at least one collection of my work published. Could I live off it? Who knows?

You can see more of Jonathon Bakers art online at his website [www.JonathonBaker.com](http://www.JonathonBaker.com). To comment on this, or any other piece you see in SKRATCH, e-mail us at [speakup@skratchmagazine.com](mailto:speakup@skratchmagazine.com).



## FEATURED ARTISTS

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# evil or sacred tattoo

by marcus solomon

Evil or sacred—it all depends on the perspective of the viewer. What is holy and inspiring to one person is often evil and abasing to another. Even though tattoos are no longer confined to the dark, shadowy world of criminals and drunkards, this permanent artwork that uses human flesh as its canvas still evokes a strong response. Tattoos of Buddhist magical symbols are considered sacred in the Orient, while all tattoos are considered evil in the Jewish faith. Cholos often get inked up with pictures of sacred images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or any number of other holy Catholic images—all while leading lives that are dripping with evil. Evil or sacred—it all depends on individual actions in conjunction with personal perspective.

Evil or Sacred Tattoo is an exemplary tattoo and piercing studio conveniently located in the hipster area of Los Angeles known as Eagle Rock. The atmosphere in the relatively small shop is warm and friendly. 24-year-old Jorge Labrada, his entrepreneurial partner Bud, and the rest of the staff always do their best to put the customer at ease. "A lot of shops are biker-style, with a heavy macho attitude and all that," he explains. "It's important to remember that we are in customer service—and when somebody walks in, we have to greet them. If you have an attitude, that person is just going to walk out. Whenever any person leaves, they are going to tell all their friends how they were treated. And everyone can see the quality of the work that was done. The best advertising is the satisfied client."

Jorge, Bud, and all their gifted cohorts have only been working in this particular studio for a year, but the joint is definitely jumping with the chatter of smiling and eager customers, the buzzing hum of multiple tattoo guns, the occasional yelp from a client, and the eternal spirit of the first prehistoric artists who initially put inked needle to flesh. Tattooing may have just come into the mainstream in recent years, but before its short-lived time in the underground, it was practiced and respected in many cultures for thousands of years.

The earliest archaeological evidence of tattoo work comes from the Bronze Age. Scientists have found tattoo needles in Scandinavia believed to have been used sometime between 2000 BCE and 500 BCE. In 1992, a frozen hunter from the Bronze Age was found in the Alps bordering Austria and Italy. Stunned researchers found 57 tattoos on his well-preserved, frozen body. The prevailing theory is that the various lines and dots all over the iceman's flesh served some sort of spiritually sacred purpose. It is a fact that tattoos have a long, established, and respected history. And when conditions permit, they will last more than a lifetime. It is also a fact that today's tattoo aficionados revere their own permanent symbols with the same devotion as the shamans of antiquity.

With only \$300 to invest, a lot of skill, and even more determination, Jorge invested in his dream; and with the ever-present support of his

longtime friend and business associate Bud, the two of them have built a modern temple of meaningful and lucrative skin-art. When he first started out, young Jorge had to earn his way into the close-knit and very clique-saturated world of the tattoo artist. He also made a pact with Bud: if one of them makes it, then both of them were going to make it. Here, the ink is as thick as blood, and has made the two friends as close as brothers. One of the first obstacles to overcome was the fact that there are just as many tattoo hacks as there are mindless idiots who let these jokers make indelible mistakes on their bodies. It takes time to build a good reputation, longer to establish a loyal clientele, and even longer to gain acceptance from the tattoo artists already recognized in the scene. "A lot of people are very protective of their business, so if you go into a shop and ask for a job, they will just turn their



back on you," Jorge elaborates. "It takes a lot of patience and a plan."

As it is with almost every tattoo aspirant, Jorge started out by working on his friends. "When I was 19, a week before my birthday I purchased a tattoo kit. I watched a 15-minute video, and that same day I worked on some of my friends. It turned out alright—and they still have them." Over time his ability grew, and he realized exactly what he wanted to do: to own and operate a respected tattoo studio. Before that could become a reality, he had to put in the required apprenticeship time. "I found this place," Jorge remembers. "It wasn't very nice, and the guy wanted \$500 up front to rent me space. I told him I had \$300 and would make up the rest. All I need is a table and a sink. He took a chance on me, and it paid off for both of us." Eventually, Jorge saved enough to open his own tattoo parlor.

The first place was successful, but the location left something to be desired. The neighborhood was pretty rough, and this ugly reality worked against plans for greater success. Apparently, the Lincoln Heights area of Los Angeles is rather

intimidating to outsiders. "It wasn't a problem for me or any of the other people who work here. We all grew up around here."

Being street smart can translate into business savvy. When Jorge first saw and decided upon Evil or Sacred's current location, he had to do a bit of creative manipulation. The owner of the property wanted too much for the monthly rent, so the clever Jorge had an idea: he simply went by from time to time and removed the "For Rent" sign. "After a while, I called the guy and asked if he had rented the place yet," Jorge recalls. "He hadn't, so eventually, he came down on the price and rented it to me!"

As one might expect, the place has a definite Mexican flavor; but as Jorge happily points out, both the staff and clientele are very diverse. So it is with the artists' ability to produce tattoos of every sort. "Our artists are capable of doing all styles. Traditional, Hispanic, Japanese—you name it. We also like all kinds of music. Psychobilly, punk rock—we play it here all the time." But are there any taboo subjects in this particular place? "[We] won't do anything that is highly offensive to other people. It depends on the situation. There are people who think they want something at the time, but I will tell them that they will regret it later. At first, I hadn't developed my skill and I had no reputation, so I was willing to do anything; [but now] I won't do any gang tattoos or anything that is racist. I also usually don't work on kids who just turned 18—especially if they want something on their hands or their neck. Some people get upset about that, but I tell them that they will thank me later. Also, everything you put out there comes back to you." Let it be known: be who you are, but haters and fools need not apply.

The eclectic mix that comprises Evil or Sacred Tattoo makes for a vivid, intense, and enjoyable experience in what is literally a museum of living canvases. When asked about what continues to drive him to ink people up, Jorge replied without hesitation: "Doing tattoos is the ultimate, because when you are working, the art is pumping blood." His favorite style is "horror, skulls, demons, that kind of stuff—images from Dia de los Muertos, and pre-Aztec imagery.... I am learning some [Salvador] Dali stuff, trying to make it look more realistic. Working without outlines, that gives things a kind of 3-D look to it. I have been doing a lot of traveling lately, and I see other tattoo artists' work, and I feed off it. I want to create art, not just a colored stamp."

Whether you are considering getting your first piece or simply want to add to your already-growing collection of everlasting ink, come on down to Evil or Sacred Tattoo and get it done in a place that is clean, experienced, friendly, and devoted to the craft. The work they do, the art they create, the infusion of their own souls into the client's tattoo will last an extremely long time—and is quite capable of outliving its owner. Evil or sacred—it's your call.



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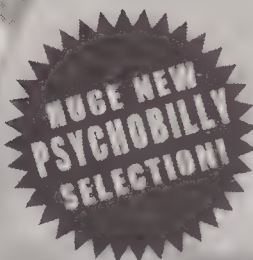
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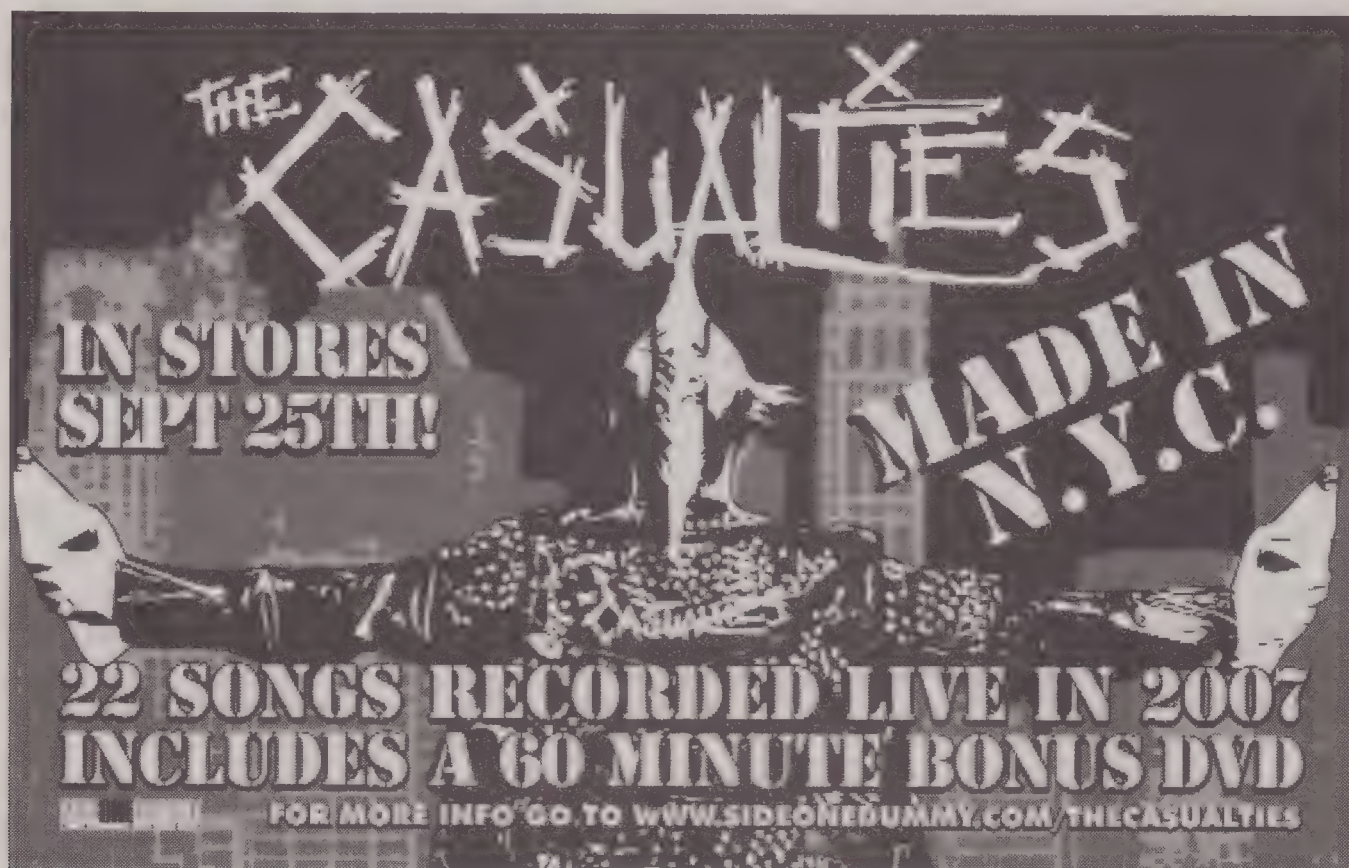
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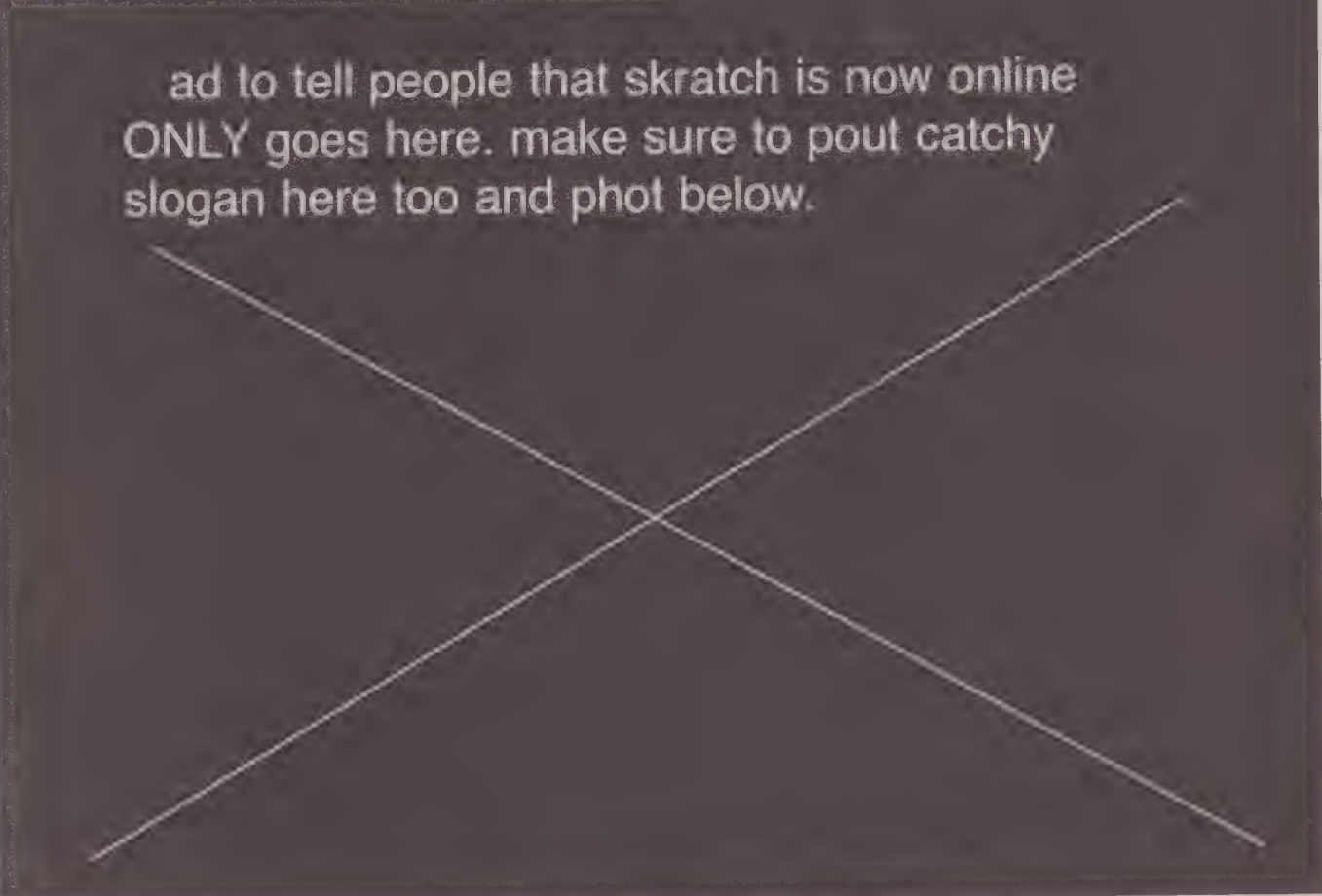


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# JUNE

**"So I'm sitting, and around me it's really white. And all the girls are wearing pajama outfits, and they're all hitting me with pillows."**

**June**

by Beth VanBoxtel

photo by mattwyssocki.com

If it weren't for the Chicago local music scene, you would've never heard of the Smashing Pumpkins, Miles Davis, Styx, Alkaline Trio, or June. Currently rounding out their fourth year as a band, June has released their second album, *Make It Blur*, through Victory Records. SKRATCH recently caught up with drummer Mark Sutor as he was on a day off from tour.

**SKRATCH: Who, in the band, has the weirdest tattoo?**

MARK: The weirdest tattoo? I'd have to say AJ right now. He got it designed...I don't even know if he told the guy he wanted this or not, but he got a giant elephant on his arm. It looks like it's about to attack you. Its mouth is open!

**SKRATCH: Who is pictured on the album art for *Make It Blur*?**

MARK: The front? I don't know his name. He is a neighbor of Tim and AJ. He's a really young kid. I think his name is Sam? I don't know. He grew up down the block, so we talked to his dad and asked him if we could get him to come in and be on the cover. And then on the back you'll see, once the actual CD comes out, there is Tim in a doorway.

**SKRATCH: I like the blurriness concept.**

MARK: Yeah I do too. I really like the colors too—a lot of whites and light blues.

**SKRATCH: Where did the album name come from?**

MARK: I thought of the name. We were trying to think of names, and we didn't know whether we just wanted something completely random or something to go with a theme. So I was trying to think, and actually the theme is pretty simple. Whenever you go through stuff in life, a lot of things become clear to you. You know, things that you did or should have done, paths, and just choices that you've made. And now you know what the better thing to do is, or what ways are clearer. *Make It Blur* is a more unique way of saying that.

**SKRATCH: Did you just finish filming a video for "I'd Lose Myself"? Is there anything random, or scary, or fun that happened during the video shoot that no one really knows about?**

MARK: The video was one of the most interesting days of my life because we all knew of what the performance stuff was going to look like, but we did not know the director was going to bring four more different, huge concept themes to it. So we got there, and there were models,

dancers...just like all these people helping with wardrobes. He had suits ready for us. We thought it was going to be a cool performance video, but actually there's different scenes. For example, my scene, I'm in like a dream setting. So I'm sitting, and around me it's really white. And all the girls are wearing pajama outfits, and they're all hitting me with pillows.

**SKRATCH: Wow. Ok. So on your album, how many songs were recorded and how many were cut to fit the album? Did you pick your best songs, or songs to fit the blurry theme for the album?**

MARK: The way we write is basically along that theme. It's usually about relationships and what's going on with us. Last time we wrote 11 songs, and that's it. That's all we had on the album. This time, we went through so many demos because we were home for so long. I would probably say there were 18 [songs] that were probably completely done, and then we took about 12 that would make it onto the album.

**SKRATCH: And they're all tracks that you can easily play live?**

MARK: We can play them all live. So far we've played eight of them live. We have three or four that we have to work on a little bit more just because we aren't used to them.

**SKRATCH: What has changed with the band since your last album release (two years ago)?**

MARK: I think we've just matured a lot. I remember talking to somebody about this, but it made a lot of sense. He was telling me how he sees bands that go on the road and they still don't really mature or learn anything, and they just go back and try writing 12 songs that are good enough to be on an album, but they don't really try giving the songs an identity or direction. They don't push for what the band wants to do.

We came back, and we said, 'Ok we want to write this kind of album. And we want to love all of these songs just as much as the next.' We used our influences that much more this time around, instead of just trying to write simple pop songs. We definitely went more in a pop direction. It's definitely influenced by Third Eye Blind and Maroon 5. You know, just giant rock bands, and we just absolutely love the pop side of their songs.

To preview new tracks from the album, visit the band's Myspace at:  
<http://www.myspace.com/june>.



# As I Lay Dying



*"...it's nothing mind-blowing at all, but I think it fits."*

As I Lay Dying  
by Beth VanBoxtel

Since their inception in 2001, As I Lay Dying has reached the far corners of the world to bring their music live to hardcore fans. Although their busy touring schedule has kept the band away for several months at a time from their hometown of San Diego, California, AILD managed to find a good amount of time to write and record a solid new album, poetically entitled *An Ocean Between Us*. SKRATCH caught up with guitarist Nick Hipa on his second day at Warped Tour with the band.

SKRATCH: What was it like working with producer Adam Dutkiewicz on your latest album?

NICK: Working with Adam D was nothing short of magical. He has a gift of being a taskmaster who gets things done perfectly while also keeping everyone in good spirits. We also took "that's what she said" jokes to an entirely new and exhausting level!

SKRATCH: Why did you choose to work with Adam?

NICK: We wanted to work with someone whose opinion we valued and trusted, as well as someone we respected. Adam is that dude for us.

SKRATCH: What was your favorite part about writing or recording this album?

NICK: My favorite part about writing and recording our new album was the day it was shipped off to be pressed. We seem to fret over EVERY aspect of our writing, recording, and mixing. Now that it is finished we can all finally chill and enjoy what we've created.

SKRATCH: I heard you have a sweet guitar solo in the video for the first single "Nothing Left." Besides that, what was your favorite part of filming for the video? And where was the video filmed?

NICK: Yeah there's a tasty little lead in that song, it's nothing mind-blowing at all, but I think it fits. My favorite part of filming the video was showing up to the set in LA and seeing a video concept I had conjured from my imagination being fleshed out. Prior to the video shoot, we had not received a treatment we were stoked on, so I ran an idea by the fellas, typed it up, and our director Brian Thompson took it from there.

SKRATCH: When you're at home in San Diego and not in the middle of a tour, how often do you eat Mexican food? If you could design a "Nicholas Burrito" what would be in it?

NICK: I eat Mexican food quite frequently. My favorite Mexican food places are Rico's Taco Shop and Santana's. I try to eat at both places at least four times a week. If I could design my very own Nicholas burrito, it would consist of rice, lettuce, beans, cheese, french fries, sour cream, and sliced avocado. It's actually what I order at Rico's every time.

SKRATCH: Who has the weirdest tattoo in the band? If you could get more tattoos, what would you get and where would you get it?

NICK: Tim has a sweet tribal on the back of his right calf that he's super embarrassed about... that one is my favorite one. As for myself, I have a new idea for a tattoo every day. Currently, I want to get a huge Indian Elephant on my ribs.

SKRATCH: Last question. What is the best thing about releasing a new album?

NICK: The best thing about releasing a new album is touring off of it, I am excited to finally be playing some new jams live!

Catch As I Lay Dying on tour in a city near you. They will be playing the main stage at Warped Tour until August 25th. Then they will be touring Europe for the month of September. For all of their tour details, visit their website at: <http://www.asilaydying.com>

# As I Lay Dying



# MY AMERICAN HEART



## My American Heart

by Ashley Decker  
photos by Lex Halaby

With a sold out CD release show for *Hiding Inside the Horrible Weather* and the Warped Tour pounding at their door, it's no doubt that San Diego's My American Heart is in for an exciting and action-packed summer. The eleven-track record, released on Warcon Records, is full of energy and enthusiasm. Here's what Jess Barrera had to say.

surprises on the record and it's great that it's being released early summer...because I feel like it's a great summer album as well.

**SKRATCH: How hard is it to come out with a new record that sounds original while still staying true to your sound?**

JESSE: It is getting pretty intense nowadays. It feels like every kid has a freaking band. It's cool though. It obviously makes things harder for us. You know, we really don't pay

our record. It was so spontaneous. He was just like "Press record when I'm ready...I'm singing a part in this song."

**SKRATCH: How is this album different from your past release *The Meaning in Makeup*?**

JESSE: I definitely think it's the biggest step we've ever taken musically as a band. It's a lot more mature than the last record. We wrote the last record in about a month. We spent a year and some writing this new one. The last record was also just a bunch of rock songs. *Hiding Inside the Horrible Weather* is definitely more dynamic.

**SKRATCH: In what areas do you think you have grown as musicians and as a song writer since the release of your last record?**

JESSE: For me personally...I

**your first single? Any plans of a music video?**

JESSE: "The Shake." We just shot a video in Seattle with director Travis Kopach (Panic! At The Disco, The Format, Thursday). We shot it on a Christmas tree farm in the middle of the woods. It's basically a bunch of fucked up things happening to Larry and us while he walks through a forest. It's a pretty trippy video.

**SKRATCH: What else can you tell us about your record that most people might not know?**

JESSE: We wrote it about the trials and tribulations of this band as a whole. It's a very personal record to all of us.

**SKRATCH: At this point what has been the most memorable experience in your music career?**

JESSE: There have just been too many amazing experiences that have happened

**"EVERYONE GROWS SOME WAY OR ANOTHER AFTER TOURING."**



to me during my last four years of touring life. But I'll always remember putting 50 crickets in Lorene Drives' van.

**SKRATCH: Where do you see My American Heart in five years? 10 years?**

JESSE: On the Disney channel. Hopefully.

**SKRATCH: If you had to play your last show today where would it be and why, and with who?**

JESSE: If I had to play my last show today it would be at The Epicentre because it's my favorite venue in San Diego and I would be playing with Refused.

For more on My American Heart visit them at [www.myamericanheartrock.com](http://www.myamericanheartrock.com) or [www.myspace.com/myamericanheart](http://www.myspace.com/myamericanheart). To comment on this or any other piece you see in SKRATCH, feel free to e mail us at [speakup@skratchmagazine.com](mailto:speakup@skratchmagazine.com).

My American Heart consists of: Larry Soliman (vocals), Jesse Barrera (vocals, guitar), Dustin Hook (bass), Steven Oira (drums) and Matthew VanGasbeck (guitar).

**SKRATCH: What about *Hiding Inside the Horrible Weather* will make it stand out from other records being released at this time?**

JESSE: I think the fact that a lot of the record is really diverse. The record has something for everyone to listen to. It's sort of like a musical journey for 40 minutes. There are a lot of

attention to what every other band is doing. I've always felt like we've had a real good amount of originality in our songs. So we've never really worried too much about it.

**SKRATCH: What was the most memorable part about recording?**

JESSE: We practically had a bike gang the whole month we were in Florida. None of us were old enough to rent a car, so we rode our bikes about four miles a day to and from the studio. It was fun times. Other than that, the whole experience was great. Oh, and when James [the producer] sang on

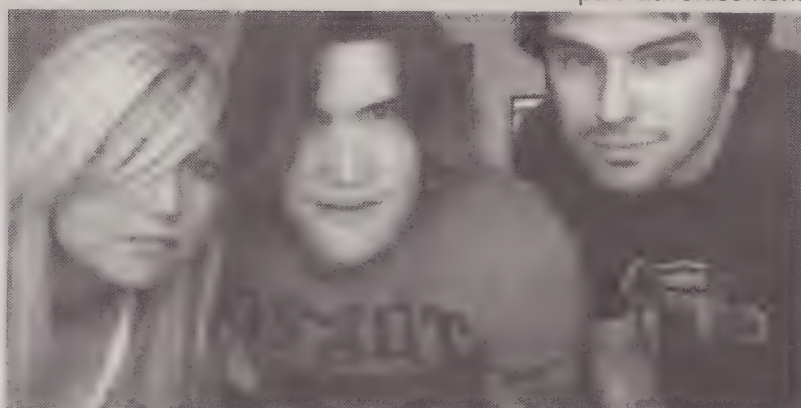
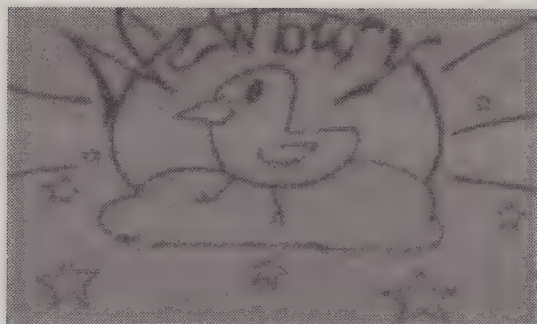
feel like I've just become a much tighter guitarist after touring for a couple years and seeing what other guitarists were doing. I learned a lot from some of the people I was on tour with. Everyone grows some way or another after touring. That's just what happens.

**SKRATCH: Which tracks do you think are the most likely to get stuck in your head?**

JESSE: "Boys! Grab Your Guns" and "The Shake." They're just fun songs with good hooks.

**SKRATCH: So which will be**





## Newbury\*

### Strangers with Candy...

They've got attitude, charm, and style...and they're as easy on the eye as their music is on the ear. (And, no, they didn't tell me to say that, either). Newbury, an up-and-coming band from Grand Rapids, MI, is a power-pop rock band not afraid to wear their influences on their sleeve. In a recent interview, I discovered that Newbury's catchy tones are a total reflection of their personality, which makes their music even more addicting.

[DK] How long have you been together as a band?

[Newbury] Well, the band started out as a side project in the summer of 2006. It wasn't until a few months ago that it all started to finally come together.

[DK] That's rather young. So tell me, where did the name Newbury come from?

[Newbury] Well, Jostin, (singer/guitarist) was on tour w/ Jessie (keys/vox) in Boston and fell in love w/ the ever so popular Newbury St. Then Jostin got a tattoo in Boston of our logo (the bird) and named the bird Newbury. When trying to come up with names, Newbury just worked.

[DK] So who are your main musical influences?

[Newbury] We are all big fans of Butch Walker. Our drummer, James, is a huge fan of the band No Doubt. Jessie loves her 80's teen pop-stars and Jostin "Well really anything that gets my attention musically."

[DK] How would you describe your music to listeners?

[Newbury] It's always so hard to try to find that one band that we can compare our sound to. It is definitely something you will hear on Top 40's/Alternative radio someday soon. We have our serious moments and we have our "I can't believe they said that" moments. Jostin has toured w/ Fall Out Boy, Bowling for Soup, Motion City Soundtrack and many more. Perhaps, having toured w/ those bands will give you an idea of what our music is like.

Newbury can be found outside a venue near you promoting w/ Bazooka gun stuck to their bright pink business cards. Their dedication and hard work is astounding. (They explained to me that they often drive up to 9 hours just to promote outside of a show, because they were going to be playing that city the next week).

Okay, so if there's one thing I've learned from Newbury, it's that shameless self-promotion works. They're not afraid to sell themselves and get their music heard, and I respect them for all that they have accomplished in such a short time. Check Newbury out on this year's Warped Tour and on their website at [www.myspace.com/newburymusic](http://www.myspace.com/newburymusic).

By D. Kramer



# BATTLE FLASK

**Battle Flask**  
by Ashley Becker

After making their way up the Western coast, Battle Flask prepares to tour for the first time. These guys recently released a six track EP, **PLEDGE YOUR ALLEGIANCE**, and have in the making a full length with the title **THE FALL OF JUSTICE**. "We're class hero" and "The Fall Of Justice" are songs that make you want to jump in the pit and swing your fist into the air. Here's what the guys had to say just before hitting the road.

Battle Flask is: Philippe (vocals), Tim (guitar), Chad (drums) and Mike (bass).

**SKRATCH:** What does your EP, **PLEDGE YOUR ALLEGIANCE**, have to offer that other records being released right now might not?

**TIM:** The songs on the EP are raw and drawn from a broad range of music styles. We

were careful not to overproduce it.

**SKRATCH:** Which songs are the best songs to play live?

**MIKE:** We keep our set strong, this way we enjoy playing all of our songs live.

**SKRATCH:** How does your live show differ from what you hear on the EP?

**TIM:** We put a lot of energy into our live show and we play a lot more songs that are on the EP.

**SKRATCH:** What inspires you to do music?

**TIM:** We thrive on live performance, and all of us have had a love for music since we were kids.

**SKRATCH:** What was it like recording at Westbeach Recorders?

**PHILIPPE:** It was very inspiring and a great feeling knowing that so many incredible musicians have played there and created so many amazing records in the past. It's a great place to be.

**recorded**

**SKRATCH:** Besides the EP, do you have any plans of a full length? When?

**TIM:** Yes... soon hopefully. Maybe next year.

**SKRATCH:** I know you guys are from all over, how did you all meet up?

**MIKE:** We met up through ads on Craig's List and LA. We were all looking for a place to live and we found each other. We were all looking for a place to live and we found each other. We were all looking for a place to live and we found each other.

**SKRATCH:** You're leaving for your first tour, who are you going with? What shows are you looking forward to most? Are you excited?

**MIKE:** This is our first tour, so we are pretty excited about every single show. We are going to meet up with our friends. We are going to meet up with our friends. We are going to meet up with our friends.

**SKRATCH:** Do I hear that you guys are to play the Desert Devils' birthday party. How'd that happen?

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Our original lineup did some  
shows in the LA and OC Derby  
and we made it to the  
second round of the competition for the  
hyped tour. In the end, we  
didn't make it. But it was a  
great experience.

**SKRATCH:** Wow, any other  
interesting gigs?

**MIKE:** We've played a couple of  
times for the LA and OC Derby  
girls and we made it to the  
second round of the competition for the  
hyped tour. In the end, we  
didn't make it. But it was a  
great experience.

**SKRATCH:** If you could be anyone  
in the world, who would you be  
and what would you be doing?

**CHAD:** I would like to play in  
the world's best band and be  
the most famous person in the world.

**SKRATCH:** What is your dream job?

**CHAD:** Making a living as a musician  
and performing live every day.

**SKRATCH:** What are your top three  
favorite movies?

**CHAD:** "Napoleon Dynamite,"  
"Deliverance" and "Mary Poppins."

**SKRATCH:** Anything else you want  
to include?

**BATTLE FLASK:** "This here river  
don't go to Ainty..."

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The Rocket Summer  
by Ashley Decker

The Rocket Summer released *Do You Feel* on July 17, the third full length released by Bryce Avary—this time on Island Records. The first single "So Much Love" is already a fan favorite and is sure to make you dance. With that being said, high expectations arise for a well deserved record. Here's what Mr. Avary had to say.

SKRATCH: The artwork on the album cover for *Do You Feel* is interesting...

BRYCE: It's really awesome. It's just a montage of feelings from songs, a lot of the album is about kind of wanting to greater things I guess... for the world and not ever getting to those things because of the issues that we have in our daily lives. They kind of just keep us down. I think it's just different for everybody whether they are real issues or professional issues or real issues or its just bills, normal everyday life. There is a cut out of me and I'm plastered on the cover with my hands sticking out and it says DO YOU FEEL. There's just kind of a lot of stuff behind it... a montage of feelings.

SKRATCH: So what song do you

**"THERE'S JUST KIND OF A LOT OF STUFF BEHIND IT..."**

think will have the biggest impact on fans?

BRYCE: That's a good question. I don't know let me think about it... Maybe the last song. Basically it's about me, why am I doing this, there's no purpose behind it, its kind of a spiritual song, its sort of me kind of laying it down for god essentially. There's 13 songs that all, in my opinion, pretty cool.

SKRATCH: Are you going to have a headlining tour with *Do You Feel*?

BRYCE: Oh yeah!

SKRATCH: Do you know who your headlining tour is going to be with?

BRYCE: I'm not really sure. We are doing Warped Tour until like the end of August and then after that I really have no idea what's going on. I will do a headlining tour this fall. It kind of depends, I mean it's always good to open, we never really had a ton of opportunities to open for bands until this year and so you know it's always nice to get more exposure as a band.

SKRATCH: What state do you think

has the best fan response?

BRYCE: Probably California. They always have

really great shows there.

SKRATCH: I know you're involved with the Invisible Children Organization. What can you tell us about it and what role do you play in helping out?

BRYCE: Well, right now, I mean as far as what it is, its like these guys from El Cajon went over to just like make a video project and we came across this awful thing that's going on where these kids are being abducted and forced to be killer soldiers at a young age and kill people. They are all getting kidnapped and its just really terrible thing. So we just bring the DVDs to show people on tour, ya know?

SKRATCH: So how was south by southwest?

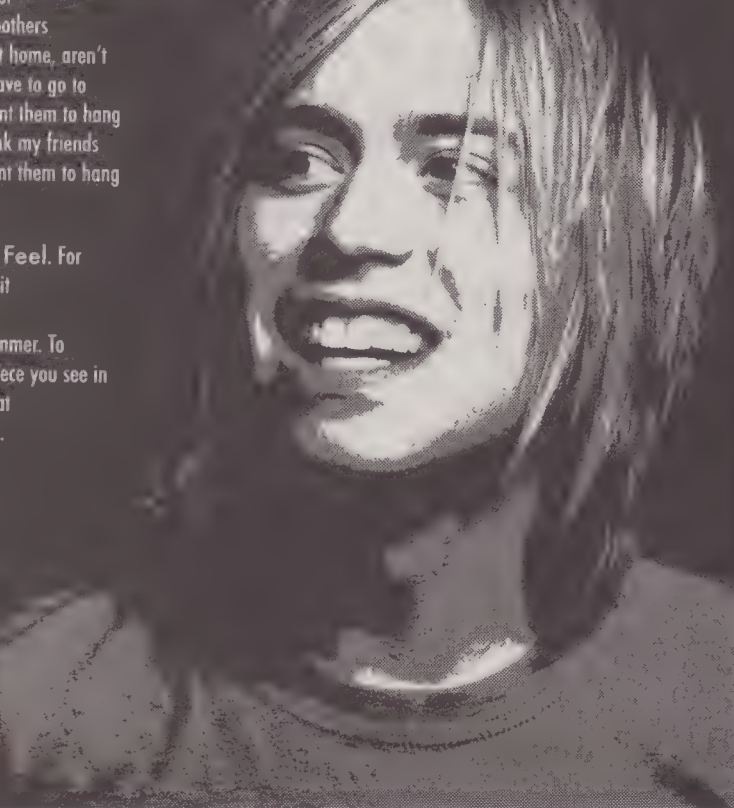
BRYCE: It was cool. It was our first year to play a really awesome situation. We've done SXSW, this is our fifth year, but this time we were on this huge stage and it was a really comfortable situation. We are really thankful to be a part of it. We've played a lot of south bys in a back of a kitchen in a bar because they just put a million bands in all these bars and you end up playing these places that you'd never play on tour.

SKRATCH: What do you think your friends like best about you?

BRYCE: Oh wow. I always like force my friends to hang out with me really late and I always want to go, go, go and I always want to keep hanging out and stuff. I think that it really bothers them. All my friends, when I get home, aren't living this lifestyle so they all have to go to school or a job and I always want them to hang out so I guess that's good. I think my friends think it's good that I always want them to hang out with me.

Be sure to check out *Do You Feel*. For more on The Rocket Summer visit [www.therocketsummer.com](http://www.therocketsummer.com) or [www.myspace.com/therocketsummer](http://www.myspace.com/therocketsummer). To comment on this or any other piece you see in SKRATCH, feel free to e-mail us at [speakup@skratchmagazine.com](mailto:speakup@skratchmagazine.com).

# The Rocket Summer





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# POISON THE WELL

## Poison The Well

by Mike SOS

When speaking to drummer Chris Hornbrook, from Florida metalcore pioneers Poison the Well via cellphone, besides dealing with the crappy reception—which disconnected us three times—we covered the band's ever-changing sound, their ties to the metalcore scene, and Chris' unique viewpoints on his home state, the way he approaches music and the life of a touring musician.

**SKRATCH: How did you guys come about shaping the sounds on *Versions* differently, and what were some of the influences behind that?**

CHRIS: Well, with the shaping of the sound, I think the only one intention that we did have was we didn't want it to sound like anything else. And we instantly kind of hit it, as our past records, it didn't sound like anything. We just wanted to get a very fresh, new sound, for better or for worse. Some people might really like it, some people might not like it, but that's what we felt that we had to do. And with all the sounds for the record, Ryan and I built the basic framework and everything. When we were in the studio, we were just kind of working with Eskil and Pelle to help push us in different directions, and it just came about that way. We just tried ideas out, and sometimes it worked, and sometimes it didn't.

**SKRATCH: Do you think because you guys recorded it in Sweden with Eskil Löveström and Pelle Henricsson that it helped facilitate you guys coming to do those different inroads? Did you have more time to do this album than previous times, or was it more like a concerted effort to experiment a little more?**

CHRIS: It definitely was intentional to want to build, use different instrumentation and just see what we can do. We didn't know how things were gonna really pan out until we actually got there, and the crew introduced us to when you have it tracked out, and all the perfect tracks are laid down. Then we had this wide array of instrumentation, whether it be the keyboard, the percussion, or whatever, especially for Ryan. He definitely has a

really good understanding of music theory and how notes work together and whatnot, and it was just easy for him to just move it to something else, essentially build a wall of sound with all these instruments. I think the basis of our band is always gonna be guitar, drums, bass and vocals. But it was kind of cool to build these little sounds and textures that they might take you five, or 10, or 20 or 30 times to hear it fully.

**SKRATCH: What kind of stuff do you guys currently listen to? Was any particular band or any particular way in which certain bands that you guys either respect or really admire come into mind like "maybe we should try, like in this kind of approach, this might work," or is it more of a brainstorm, and then just kind of letting things fly by the seat?**

CHRIS: I think there was a bit of both, but I feel that the shaping of the songs and the manner of which we did it was how we would do it. We weren't taking influence from anybody else. There was just like, "Okay — this is how we want to do it." But as far as music that we listen to, all of us listen to just a wide array of different artists and bands, and it's really difficult to pinpoint. I think that that's one thing that helps shapes our sound, is that we don't just listen to one thing. We listen to such a large array of things and there's such a large palette of sound that it's, not as identifiable as say another popular band out there that's like, "Okay, well, there's other bands, they're equal, so let's follow their road."

You kind of put the two together.

**SKRATCH: Was it easier or harder to work as a trio this time around?**

CHRIS: It's so difficult to find people that are dedicated, or really good at their instrument, or just people that just mix really well. It's really difficult. If you're on tour, and they're an excellent musician, but they're just annoying as fuck to be around, it's just not gonna fly.

**SKRATCH: Do you feel like the back to basic approach helped you guys kind of stretch your boundaries, and helped you guys become more boundless than having other people around?**

CHRIS: Oh, you mean like, the lack of

like, a member and us working as a trio? I think that, for our theory, there was just a very long, uphill battle. "Okay, we have to do this." If this person or that person chooses to leave, then fine, but Ryan, Jeff and I have been there essentially since the beginning. Ryan is a talented enough dude to where if a bass player, or another guitar player is not there, it's not really a big deal, because he can play a bass like a bass player, play guitar, obviously, and he knows enough like I said where he can like essentially write another guitar player's part that could work against his...in a good way. It builds like a nice little colorful palette. But it was definitely stressful, but we knew that if we worked hard, that we could do it, get the songs that we wanted, and it would be fine.

**SKRATCH: How'd you guys come up with the album title for *Versions*?**

CHRIS: Actually, Jeffrey presented it to us, and yeah, that was it. I mean as far as it's interpretation, I know everybody has a different view of what the record title actually means, but yeah, it was just something that Jeffrey had just sitting around. He had had for a while, and just wanted to make sure that it was something that he wanted to present to us and I think he felt comfortable where he was like, "Alright — I feel like the record should be called this."

**SKRATCH: Now with all the crazy instrumentation going on in the album, how are you guys re-creating that live? Are you guys able to do some of the more, I guess, delicate sound, or the more, like, non-traditional metalcore sounds that you guys are grouped in with? Is that a problem live? Or are you guys winging it? Or how is that going about?**

CHRIS: Well, right now it's really a very premature stage. It's one of those things that we're still learning how some of these songs work live. But, for the most part, I think we're able to get away with, you know, two guitars, bass, drums, and vocals for some of them. I don't think the instrumentation itself is that imperative...it's kind of like the record itself. You can hear all these little cool themes and textures, and that's kind of



what makes it cool and special. And when you come live, and it's the bare bones of it all, it really cuts through and hits you. That's

California that I've met and there are some really not cool people in California that I've met.

to see the country, see the world, you're playing shows for kids, and how they're really receptive and appreciative of what you're



what I feel and what I've been noticing

**SKRATCH: How's the reaction been so far to the new stuff live?**

CHRIS: I think for the most part, kids are just watching and absorbing. Whether they like it or not, I'm not sure. I feel that, even though the record does sound like us, it is definitely a very big change, sort of thing. And I can understand that it might take kids a while to really absorb it, or try to absorb it, and realize that it's either their thing or not.

**SKRATCH: Do you guys ever do any writing on the road?**

CHRIS: Not for myself. I think Ryan will sit down sort of put together some chords and some ideas, but as far as actually orchestrating, not really. I feel that to write really good, solid material, you have to be in your comfort zone.

**SKRATCH: What's the best thing about Sweden?**

CHRIS: Best thing about Sweden. I don't know. I couldn't give you an honest answer. I don't even think it's like our best or worst anything, it's just different.

**SKRATCH: What's the biggest difference you've noticed?**

CHRIS: It's just a very different culture. I mean, normal everyday shit is the same. Obviously, they drive cars, they have McDonald's and Subway and all that bullshit there. But culturally, it's just different. The way they interact with one another is just way different. If you're not used to it, it just feels, obviously foreign.

**SKRATCH: How has living in Florida, growing up in Florida, shaped the way in which you guys view music, play music, stuff like that?**

CHRIS: I can definitely tell you this after seeing the touring world, more or less. There's something really organic and homely about South Florida. There's general warmth that is definitely not that it's lacking in other places, but there's a certain quality that talented people that come from South Florida. I moved to California for two years and when I moved back, I definitely saw it. There's a different mentality in California than there is in Florida. Waaaay different. There are some really cool people in

**SKRATCH: How do you guys feel about the term metalcore? And how do you guys feel about where you fit in there?**

CHRIS: I don't know, man. To be perfectly honest, it's a part of who we are as a band, or were, at one point, but I'm just gonna speak for myself and I just feel just like we're drifting away from that direction. As much as I love hardcore, and I love metal what I like about that type of music in order to attempt to fuse together has dwindled. There's like a handful of bands that I really like that do it really fucking great, and so I guess it's just kind of like that to me. Where we fit? I don't know. It's just so weird to me because I even hear with our second record *Tear from the Red*, I don't hear much metalcore in that versus the very first record where I definitely hear it, as it definitely was an influence for us at that time. I understand that it tags us for that, but for every record that just to still kind of have that tagline, it just hits me kind of weird.

**SKRATCH: Like a misnomer almost?**

CHRIS: Yeah, I don't really know about those terms, metalcore or true metal...I don't really categorize it as being real forms of music. It's all derived from either, you know rock and roll, or hardcore, or something

**SKRATCH: What do you think sets apart Poison the Well from other bands?**

CHRIS: Well, I don't know to be honest. It's really hard for me to be subjective. We're all very passionate people about music and about this band, and about our instruments. We've definitely met a great deal of bands that have similar ideals that we do, but just from how we are, we have one focus. There's not really any other hidden intentions behind anything...we just want to make the best music we possibly can. So when we're older, we look back, we're like, "Wow, we made some pretty cool shit for that time."

**SKRATCH: Now do you prefer touring or recording, and why?**

CHRIS: I actually prefer them pretty equally. I definitely used to prefer recording, because you have these really cool ideas and you lay them down, and watch them grow, and can hear them mature, and it's really cool. And then touring,, you're out on the road, you get

doing, it's really cool. I gotta say it's the best of both worlds.

**SKRATCH: Is it hard to derive a set list now?**

CHRIS: The trick in the set list is creating a flow. It's really difficult to leave out older material. I feel that we put enough time and effort and thought into it that we can make it work. There's definitely a sense of obligation. But, I don't understand where, like why these kids like the song so much? It's way flattering, and I'm definitely very appreciative of it, but some songs are almost ten years old. Kids pay 12 bucks essentially to see that song. And whether it's true or not, I don't know. But it's just kind of disappointing. We do have other records, but I can't be subjective because I helped write the record and I've been involved with this band, so I really can't feel like an outside perspective. All I know is I really care about, or we really care about, the records that we write, and we feel good if we've made good evolution on all the records involved. It feels like kids are holding onto a past, or a certain idea of this band.

**SKRATCH: What bands have you not played with on tour, or gigged with in general, that you'd love to?**

CHRIS: I think it'd be really cool to go on tour with that band Mastodon.

**SKRATCH: What are you currently listening to? What bands in the recent, or anything old you've been digging out that you dig on now, like anything that you want to, like, give props to?**

CHRIS: Oh, man, that's just so difficult because I have iPod ADD, where I don't actually listen to records in their entirety. I listen to a few songs, not that I don't like the whole record, but, you know, you're just feeling a few songs. Today, I was driving and I heard everything from Oasis, "What's the Story, Morning Glory?" to Weezer to the Bronx to - this French band Air, just all over the place, like that. I listen to every type of music. Any person that knows how to write a cool song, I'll get you, you know?



## Thread of Hope

There might not be another band of the face of the earth that works harder than the guys in Thread of Hope. They truly embody the phrase "you reap what you sow" and since their formation in 2004, the Florida natives

are gunning for complete and utter notoriety. And with a sound that channels punk icons Bad Religion and The Bouncing Souls, it's no wonder why Thread of Hope are on the verge of becoming the next big thing. But before that happens, I got a chance to catch up with

later?

GABE: This has been a fairly busy year so far. We released our new full length **BY THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH** in May, and have been playing some pretty cool shows here in Florida. We did the Florida Music Fest in Orlando, which also featured

time again, we have seen the benefits that self-sufficiency has on a band's longevity in the scene or "music business." We have kept a close circle when it comes to trusting people with our affairs. I decided to release the new record on my own label, Brick & Iron

# Thread of Hope

have released their heavily anticipated debut **BY THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH** this past May, have established a admirable legion of dedicated fans and managed to get themselves involved on several big name compilations (including the CD featured for Warped). Although any other group would settle for such recognition, the Thread boys

guitarist Gabe Katz to talk about the future of Thread of Hope.

Thread of Hope is Jason Coyle (guitar), Steven Vazquez (backing vocals, bass), Matt Bivetto (lead vocals), Shawn Dwyer (drums), and Gabe Katz (guitar, vocals, mandolin, organ).

SKRATCH: So what have you and the band been up to

Flogging Molly and Chuck Ragan from Hot Water Music. We also recently played a show in Miami with the reunited Killing Time, which was a big thrill for us.

SKRATCH: Since you formed in 2004, what have some of your biggest obstacles been breaking into the business? GABE: Well, we have all been playing in bands together since the mid-'90s. Time and

Recordings, instead of going with a more established indie label. This, of course, forces myself and the whole band to work that much harder, but that hunger is a big part of our music and what we represent. The DIY ethic certainly has its' limitations, but if you stick with people you trust, stay true to your own vision and actually put in the blood and sweat, the outcome (no matter what it



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may be) is far more rewarding..

SKRATCH: How receptive has the public been of your sound? And how would you describe your fan base?

GABE: We've been pleasantly surprised by the diversity of our audience. I think that

and I think a lot of our old friends were a bit surprised by Thread of Hope's more stripped down approach. But we've had overwhelming support from a majority of those people that we've known for many years.

SKRATCH: What was the

several months. Thankfully, I was able to bounce back, and we finished the record in April. At that point, the label we were working with sort of put things on hold temporarily, due to just having a lot on their plate. I had been putting together ideas for my label, and it

added to the list of bands on this years M.E.A.N.Y Fest in NYC, which will take place in October. Between now and the end of the year, we are hoping to get back out on the road and really get our momentum going.

SKRATCH: Anything else

...the title is kind of a celebration of our sacrifices and beating the odds.

our music and lyrics translate to people of many ages and walks of life, and not just punk rockers or hardcore kids. Melody and energy and strong hooks are the basic elements of Rock 'n' Roll, and we have done our best to capture that in our own way. The members of our band all have a long history in South Florida's hardcore scene,

hardest part about making BY THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH? What does the album title symbolize exactly?

GABE: Well, the title is actually a reference to the obstacles we faced throughout the recording and release of this record. Late last year, in the early stages of mastering, I had to have a major surgery and was out of commission for

seemed like the best choice to put the record out myself. So, I've lost alot of sleep, and gained a lot of debt, but the label is going strong and Thread of Hope has a new record out. So, the title is kind of a celebration of our sacrifices and beating the odds.

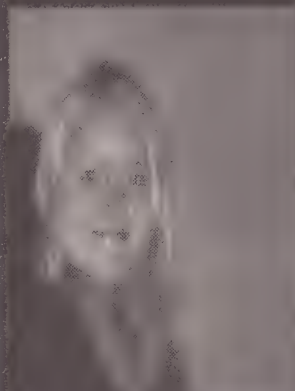
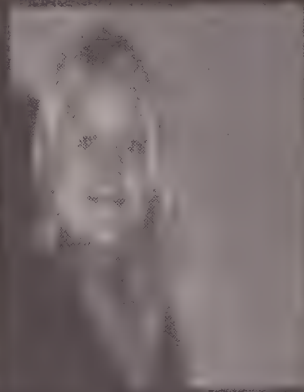
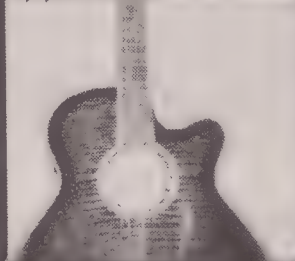
SKRATCH: So what's up next for Thread of Hope?

GABE: We have just been

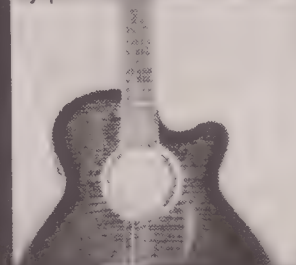
memorable you would like to add before we cut this short?

GABE: I wanna say cheers to all our friends and the bands in Ft. Lauderdale and South Florida. For everyone else, check out Pitch Black Radio, Mehkago NT, Guajiro, Dancefloor Justice and so many other amazing bands down here.

[myspace.com/rachaelrussellmusic](http://myspace.com/rachaelrussellmusic)



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**The Burning of Rome**

Preview the new album  
**"A Marriage Between Heaven & Hell"**  
exclusively available at [myspace.com/theburningofrome](http://myspace.com/theburningofrome)



inspire other girls who like hardcore and want to sing to believe they can do it, too.

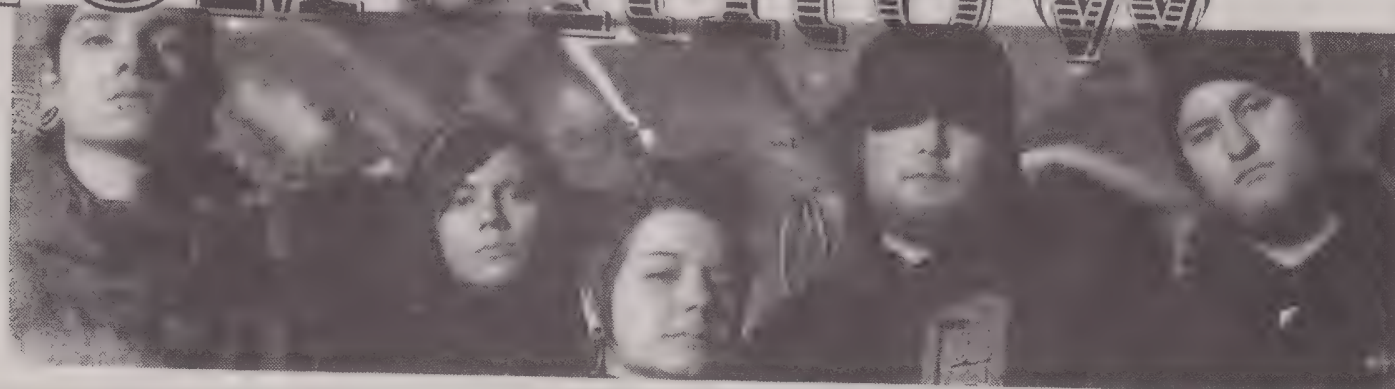
SARAH: That's one of my driving forces, why I still do it.

**SKRATCH: Has the band toured a lot?**  
SARAH: We've mostly done West coast tours, also to Utah and places like that. One of our band members is a tattoo artist and doesn't get much time off. I don't get much time off. And

we all have dogs, so can't be gone long. We hope to do a national tour soon.

**SKRATCH: Your band bio talks about**

# THIS TIME TOMORROW



**This Time Tomorrow**  
by Marcia Taylor

This Time Tomorrow was formed in early 2005 by members of the Northwest's crust and hardcore scenes, with the intent of bringing outrage and action back into an apathetic musical community. The Seattle-based group's members are vegans and focus their political lyrics on animal and environmental liberation. The band released its first CD, *NADIR*, on New Age Records earlier this year. This Time Tomorrow is Sarah on vocals, John and Kim on guitar, Mike on bass and Bobby on drums, although the drum tracks on the CD were recorded by Joe Axler. You can learn more about the band at [www.myspace.com/thistimetomorrow](http://www.myspace.com/thistimetomorrow). I spoke with Sarah about the record, veganism, the Homeland Security Act and more.

**SKRATCH: I have to say right upfront that I don't hear of many hardcore bands that have a female fronting them. How did you get the spot?**

SARAH: Originally John, Andrew and Mike were starting a band and looking for a vocalist. We all knew each other from the hardcore scene. They thought of me, but hired someone else, and that didn't work out.

**SKRATCH: Is the hardcore scene big in Seattle?**

It didn't use to be, but

it's getting big these days, I'd known Mike and Kim for a while.

**SKRATCH: What are some of the band's influences?**

SARAH: Sound wise, Catharsis, Trial (for a little bit of a mid-'90s epic-y heavy hardcore sound). And we have some more crust punk and hardcore influences.

**SKRATCH: So, am I correct in saying that This Time Tomorrow is out of the ordinary in having a female vocalist?**

SARAH: We definitely are, although it's getting less unusual. When I first started singing, there were maybe three others in the U.S. Now there are maybe 10.

**SKRATCH: What attracted you to hardcore music?**

SARAH: I've been listening to it for a long time. I became SX at 16. I like heavy music. SX was close to hardcore because of the veganism. When I was 18, I wanted to join a band, but it seemed like that option was only available to boys. At that point, most guys in bands were not interested in including a first-time female singer who hadn't proven herself. I ended up asking girls to form a band, and so my first band was an all-girl band.

**SKRATCH: I think it's great that you're fronting a band like This Time Tomorrow, because it must**

SARAH:

**reawakening the hardcore scene politically. Would you talk about that?**

SARAH: At one time in hardcore, there were a lot of political bands like Earth Crisis. But they died off, and metal core, fashion bands with nothing to say took over. We are all SX, vegan and very politically driven, so we wanted to bring that back. There were some bands we admired, like 7 Generations, Gather, Rhino Charge, Socialized Crucifixion—which, by the way, is female-fronted and has a female guitar player.

**SKRATCH: How do you feel about the prospects for changing things with regard to animal rights?**

SARAH: We know what the reality is, but we still want to fight for it. We want to be a voice for veganism. But we also feel it's all right to voice the hopelessness that comes with the knowledge that things are fucked and not going to get better, that it's okay to know that and still enjoy life. The very least you can do is become a vegan. And support people who are releasing farmed animals and/or becoming political prisoners for doing that, or for having their right to speak taken from them.

**SKRATCH: What do you mean by "having their right to speak taken from them?"**

SARAH: Now you can pretty much go to jail for telling someone to do something that will cost animal enterprises money. For example, if I sent an e-mail to someone who works at an animal enterprise,



enterprise, because of the Homeland Security Act, I could be charged with conspiracy to act or conspiracy to commit domestic terror. If you said, "do this," or if I said, "make a flyer telling them about something,"

and then I showed my neighbor the flyer, and the neighbor broke a window at the place the flyer was about or does graffiti there, I could be held responsible. I could be in trouble for even talking about this with you.

**SKRATCH:** A lot of people do not realize how many aspects of the legal system that had NOTHING to do with 9/11 got changed by the Homeland Security Act. The more I learn about it, the scarier it is. Do you provide information at your shows about the issues that you're interested in?

**SARAH:** We always bring a little bit of literature. I don't talk too much about it, because you can turn people the other way so that they tune you out. If they like the music, just that can bring a positive reaction. We get a lot of myspace messages about people who quit drinking and smoking and who are trying to give up meat. I'm very happy when that happens.

**SKRATCH:** I noticed that your songs on the disc are not named, but just numbered. Is there a reason for that?

**SARAH:** We stuck to calling the songs by number because we didn't want to sum up the song in a few words. We'd rather have people listen to them. We call them by numbers when we're working on them.

And we didn't want to make up stupid names that mean nothing to us.

**SKRATCH:** Do you want to talk about any specific song or songs on the record?

**SARAH:** Not really. I'd say that overall, [when writing the lyrics] I'm into giving them some fantasy imagery. I like to read fantasy. I like to make them sound more metal than they are. None of the songs stands out to me as more special or important.

## WE ALL HAVE DOGS SO CAN'T BE GONE LONG

**SKRATCH:** What is the band doing to support the record in the upcoming months?

**SARAH:** We're playing a couple of shows in California—Redding, Chico and maybe one or two shows in the Orange County/L.A. area—from August 22 to August 26. We'll also probably play in Reno.

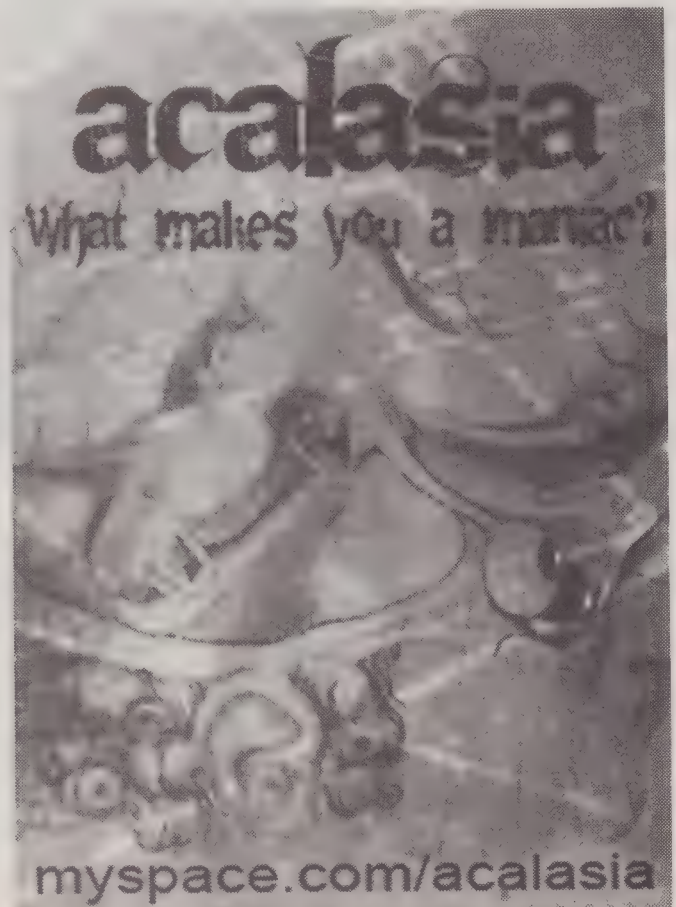
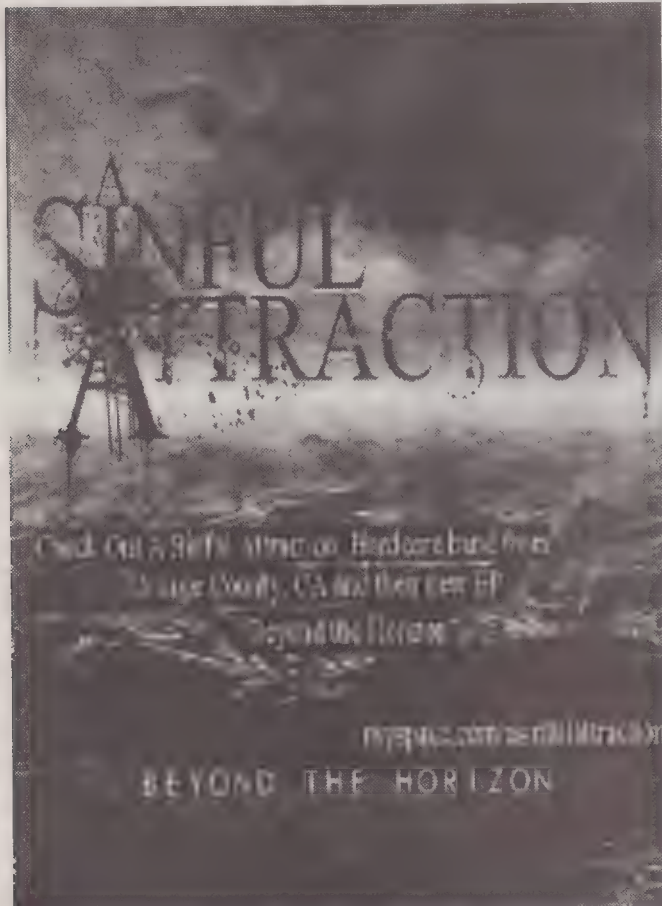
**SKRATCH:** Are you working on any new material yet for another record?

**SARAH:** I think we're trying to get a good feel for this one and play more so people get to know it better. It won't be too long before Mike or John want to write new songs, but we are still getting used to playing with our new drummer, who is awesome.

**SKRATCH:** Any last words before we conclude our interview?

**SARAH:** Consider veganism. We're happy if you like our music. We have a new music video made that we're putting on our myspace and on the New Age Records site.

If you would like to comment on this interview or anything else in SKRATCH, please e-mail us at [www.speakup@skratchmagazine.com](mailto:www.speakup@skratchmagazine.com).





# FEBRUARY STATE



## February State

There's something you just can't get shake about Arizona natives February State. They have their first album, **SINCERELY, MIDNIGHT LUCK**, slated to be released in just a few weeks, and with a sound that capitalizes on the immaculate use of piano and uncomfortably honest lyrics, the debut is a heavily anticipated one. In this e-mail interview, frontman Sam Hoffman recently explains to **Skratch** readers how it was making **SINCERELY, MIDNIGHT LUCK** and what the future has in store for February State.

February State is Sam Hoffman (lead vocals,

piano), Jason Slocum (drums), David Welch (guitar) and Jesse Miller (bass).

**SKRATCH:** You guys have your debut album, **SINCERELY, MIDNIGHT LUCK**, being released in about a month or so. How would you describe the process of making an album?

**SAM:** The making of this album has been a long process, to say the least. We've been recording songs since last December, knowing that we wanted to make a full-length record, but not really knowing the time and effort and money we were going to have to invest in this project. We recorded songs, scratched songs, reworked songs, then rerecorded songs because we figured if we were going to put ourselves in this

record we better get the best material we can. We wanted something we could look back on and be really proud of, and so far I think we are accomplishing what we set out to do. We continually wrote songs for almost a year and weeded through them and picked the best ones for this album and frankly, the songs just keep getting better for us. Another bonus is that we have had complete creative control over this record with no real producer, so our sound can kind of "shift shapes" depending on personal situations and emotions. Nevertheless, I'm really happy with everything we have.

**SKRATCH:** You cite bands such as **Jack's Mannequin** and **Mae** as some of your influences. Did you head into the studio with any preconceived notions of what you wanted the album to sound like?

**SAM:** We headed into the studio as a band that had a different singer and a different guitarist, so no, we had no idea what our band would end up sounding like. Our influences just kind of set up our instrumentation and without those bands I'm not sure if we would have the motivation and as much love for what we do. Each song on this record is unique in its own way. I wouldn't say the record is pop/punk or hardcore even though

we incorporate both of those approaches into our music. We write how we feel and that's basically what it comes down to.

**SKRATCH:** Do you have any idea what the first single is going to be? Any video treatments planned out?

**SAM:** That's a tough one, because the people that have heard the record all have different ideas of which song they think is going to be the single. I guess it just depends on which side of our music appeals to the wider audience, not to sound capitalistic. We could sell our slow piano songs and get a whole different set of fans as we would if we went with a faster, edgier song. So hopefully, we can find a happy medium so as not to disappoint



**"I'M TRYING TO FIGURE  
OUT THINGS FOR MYSELF  
JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE"**

anyone. As for video treatments, it all depends on the song, but our band is full of scatterbrains and we have some ideas hiding up our sleeves.

**SKRATCH: What is your favorite song off the new record and why?**

**SAM:** My favorite song of the new record, as of now, is called "The Irony of Ivory." I like it a lot for its lyrics and the way it flows, but mostly for the feeling I get when I listen to it. I have this image in my head and every time I listen to the song I go there and I get really detached. It's quite moving, if I may say so myself. However, we all seem to have favorites that are constantly changing with the weather. Like Jason's favorite is a song that we haven't recorded yet so we'll see how that turns out. It just makes it harder to be content with one song because we seem to keep outdoing ourselves in the studio and every time we record a new song it becomes everyone's favorite.

**SKRATCH: Do you think there's a stigma attached to your sound, due to the heart-wrenching lyrics/vocals and the band's bold use of piano?**

**SAM:** Well, not so much of a stigma. We seem to believe that the lyrics and piano make our music enthralling and memorable. It's funny how much you change how dynamic a song is just by adding an instrument with a different timbre like a piano. We use the piano as the foundation for all of our songs because

we think it is an excellent canvas to break down ideas and figure out melodies, harmonies, etc. As for the lyrics and vocals, I write the lyrics about very personal thoughts and feelings. I'm trying to figure out things for myself just like everyone else and I try not to be someone I'm not and in that, I think the listeners and fans can connect with it on a personal/emotional level.

**SKRATCH: What can we expect next from February State (a tour I hope!)?**

**SAM:** Next from February State, you can expect a full-length CD called SINCERELY, MIDNIGHT LUCK that, in a good way, doesn't really sound like any bands out now. We put a lot of thought into each track and we believe every song on the record is worth listening to. We will be doing some mini touring of Arizona and California and just trying to get these songs into as many ears as possible and meeting some lovely people. So keep your eyes and ears open for our new record and maybe we'll be coming to a town near you in the not so distant future.



[www.myspace.com/angerising](http://www.myspace.com/angerising)

**ANGER RISING**



**The Hovercraft Pirates**  
by Josh Schwartz

With a new EP out, Northern Irish punk band, The Hovercraft Pirates are turning heads with their brand of story-telling, pirate-touting, punk rock. With titles such as, "We're Pirates" and "Prison Break," I was sure to expect a sea-shanty feel, but instead, I found a conglomeration of punk, alternative, booze-inspired riffage, and traditional Irish folk influences. They recently played the Norway Hell Festival, sharing the stage with Turbonegro, Dimmu Borgir and the ever so cool, Snoop D.O. double G. The Hovercraft Pirates are making strides with having barely released their EP. The Hovercraft Pirates are self-proclaimed pirates of the new age, heavily influenced by '90s American punk rock. With stories about Captain Avery, musical stops that remind me of Seattle, 1992, and a pirate ship that floats on land or water, there's nowhere this band of corsairs can't go. I caught up with Paul Blue through an e-mail interview while their hovercraft ship was under routine maintenance.

**SKRATCH: First off: Name, occupation, instrument, favorite celebrity to trash.**

HCP: Paul Blue, guitar and vocals. Occupation? I'm a fucking pirate! And here with me is Conall Oh[drums]. Paris Hilton, cuz it's cool to hate her, and she is a bit of a tard.

**SKRATCH: You're a fairly new band. Can you tell us about to yourselves...What part of Ireland are you from? Do leprechauns really exist? If so would they be part of the IRA? How did you boys meet, how long have you been playing for?**

HCP: We're from Northern Ireland and yes, leprechauns exist, but they're disguised and you only really find out the next morning. Me and Conall go way back but we met Adam when we took his ship and gave him one chance to impress us. He did this by kicking us to the ground, downing

three pints of grog and playing the sloppiest most genuine bass riff we had ever heard...no, really.

**SKRATCH: I detect a wide range of influences in your music. It's brilliantly done. How does the writing process work for you?**

HCP: A lot of coffee...a lot of time, writing till four in the morning then fine tuning the songs. After those important steps are done, we get together and jam them completely differently and that's what comes out. We used to make our songs on stage because our set was so small.

**SKRATCH: Do British people really have bad teeth?**

HCP: Yes... Yes, they do. Well, ok...not really.

**SKRATCH: Is this your first EP together? If so, describe the recording session. It sounds very reminiscent of rise against, against me, against all authority, against the grain, anything really againstish.**

HCP: It is our first EP together and it sounds like that mainly from what me and Conall would call "classic punk" for us. All the '90s Epitaph type of punk was flooded in our heads, but we still wanted to do our own thing and I don't think we've failed.

**SKRATCH: The production sounds expensive. Was it?**

HCP: It was quite expensive, but it was definitely worth it. Our producer, Neal Calderwood in Manor Park Studio, is in our opinion the best in Ireland and he was just lovely to work with. Had a tidy ass too.

**SKRATCH: What bands were you listening to while recording the EP?**

HCP: Everything from Pink Floyd to Gogol Bordello with a little Frank Sinatra.

**SKRATCH: Your first gig was at Nerve Centre in Derry. Can you describe that for us?**

HCP: Well, the Nerve Centre is actually quite a big gig to have over here and it was like an honour for us,

especially to be so far up on the bill at our first gig. I can remember it being warm. That's it.

**SKRATCH: I see that you've played the Norway Hell Festival that included acts such as Snoop Dogg and Turbonegro. How was that?**

HCP: It was an absolutely amazing experience. Everyone seemed to love us because we were so different and we were treated like rock stars. We were sent there by the great people at amazingtones.com and the PR guy they sent with us really took care of us, we hated coming home.

**SKRATCH: Was it nerve racking sharing a stage with Turbonegro and Dimmu Borgir?**

HCP: I'll be honest, I was almost crying before going on stage. Conall was fine, he always is, but as soon as both of us go on stage we seem bullet proof and always do our best. It's what I'm born to do, so I'm always fine, but I always worry no matter how big the stage or crowd.

**SKRATCH: How did your music fit with the whole Hell Festival program? (acts included Dimmu Borgir, Turbonegro, Elvira Nikolaisen, and other jazz, blues, orchestral music as well as rock)**

HCP: It was very strange having so many acts on the bill, but what was stranger was that all those people seemed to like us. Looking into the crowd I saw Dimmu Borgir fans shouting for more from us and old guys that were obviously there for the blues going mad for us.

**SKRATCH: What has been the shittiest gig you've played?**

HCP: A local "portstewart rocks" because the audience is just there to see their friends and not hear good live music. It's a shame but it's the way the scene is over here.

**SKRATCH: What bands would you love to play with?**

Paul: Authority Zero would be one of my main ones.

Conall: Sublime (RIP Bradley)

**SKRATCH: What bands would you hate to play with?**

HCP: Bands who are up themselves just generally piss me off, so pretty much anyone like that. Metallica, Elton John. I know that's random but I hope you get the idea.

**SKRATCH: I've been to gigs in the UK, and I found that most of the shows were a weird mixture of people. What kinds of kids do you get at your shows? Is rock a segregated thing out in Ireland, e.g., punks don't hang out with the goth kids, and emo kids don't get along with stoner kids.**

HCP: It is very segregated, but there's not many punks over here and usually emo kids and stoner kids listen to punk without even realising what they are, or that they're even emo kids. So that's why you get a unique atmosphere. We don't judge people. We only ask them to be pirates. Listen to what you wanna listen to, don't let anyone tell you different.

**SKRATCH: If you were on a deserted island with no food or water, which one of your band mates would you eat first and why?**

HCP: Conall because there's simply more of him to go around. Plus, Adam gets full up real easy.

**SKRATCH: Do you guys plan on touring the states?**

HCP: We do and we can't wait, we just need more of a fan base across the seas. It's a long way for us and we want it to be worth it.

**SKRATCH: What bands do you try real hard not to rip off? I ask this not to be facetious, but sometimes you love a band so much, that you walk that fine line between respect and admiration, and subliminal plagiarism. Trust me; it happens to all of us.**

HCP: I think because of the variety in our music we have to be careful not to rip anyone off. Strangely enough

THE HOVERCRAFT PIRATES





LUCKILY, WE HAVE OUR OWN STYLE SO IT NEVER SOUNDS THE SAME AS ANOTHER BAND.

and there might be a song about her on the album coming up. I'll still have to go with Captain Avery

though, of whom we have a song of on the EP. The pirate that was never caught.

**SKRATCH: How did you guys come up with the name?**

HCP: It's like a way to say that we are new age pirates. I'm not quite sure where it came from. We just have a lot of random thoughts.

**SKRATCH: What kinds of things do you sing about? How would you describe your music? Do you share any political beliefs that set you apart from other punk bands?**

HCP: Our only political belief is that they are your own beliefs. Growing up in the conflict and bullshit of Northern Irish politics we try not to get too political because it causes a lot of problems with narrow minded people over here. We are sick of having religion and things like this interfere with what we wanna do, so we've opted into telling stories and making our music alive rather than opinionated.

**SKRATCH: What would you like to accomplish with your band?**

HCP: To be able to afford a PS3... That could take years though, see how much those things cost? But on a serious note we'd love to just be able to play and have people listen to us before judging us by our clothes or our names or whatever. We love playing

live so a great accomplishment would be a European and American tour... Maybe even Warped Tour?

**SKRATCH: What have you learned from your previous band experiences? How did they end?**

HCP: We have all played in bands before and have learnt a lot and make a lot of contacts out of it, we've learned that dedication is key and most importantly, if your not having fun, what's the point in playing? Our previous bands have ended mainly because of other commitments for people like University or jobs but we have decided to join forces and try to get something going.

**SKRATCH: Going back to the subject of cannibalism, which band member would probably taste worst?**

HCP: That just made me rethink that other cannibalism question. I think I'll let Adam eat most of Conall, then eat Adam. Cuz, I know for a fact he tastes pretty good... What? How? Ummm... someone told me...

**SKRATCH: Any last words of wisdom?**

Conall: Don't be afraid to try something and don't listen to what everyone else is saying, as long as you're happy, I know it's cliché, but it's important because everyone's trying to be cool with this emo phase and it's just gonna burn out like all the rest. Paul: Help us get to you guys, go to our myspace and tell us, buy our cd, send us little heart shaped cards. Or fly over and give us hugs...Please?

just trying not to rip ourselves

off on the next CD and create something fresh. Luckily, we have our own style so it never sounds the same as another band.

**SKRATCH: I always found it interesting that American music snobs are always touting European bands, and most Europeans prefer American bands over their own. Would you say you're more influenced by American bands or European bands?**

HCP: Mainly it's American '90s punk like Bad Religion, Rancid, The Offspring, etc. We grew up listening to bands on Epitaph and Nitro records, but we also listen to a lot of European bands like Capdown or Refused. It really doesn't matter to us where the band comes from as long as they're good.

**SKRATCH: Who's your favorite historical pirate? I like Calico Jack, personally.**

HCP: Awww, come on man! Calico Jack was a mediocre Pirate with bad clothes...Anne Bonny who he sailed with though was a fierce woman of the sea

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# REEL BIG FISH

**Reel Big Fish**  
by Janelle Jones

SKRATCH caught up with jovial Reel Big Fish trumpet player John Christianson (who joined the band three years ago after doing time in Forces of Evil) while on their summer tour to discuss the long-running ska band's new record, the cheekily-titled *Monkeys For Nothin' and the Chimps for Free*, their new "happy" mindset, vocalist/guitarist Aaron Barrett's death-metal vocal savvy and lots more.

**SKRATCH: It's funny, two years ago I interviewed Aaron. It got a little psychological at times.**

JOHN: Really? Was it strange? Was it creepy?

**SKRATCH: [Laughs] Not creepy, but normally things don't get that deep. I didn't know if he was for real...**

JOHN: No. He's crazy.

**SKRATCH: I'm not saying crazy, but what verified the truth of it was I saw the DVD with the new record and when Scott was talking about the "black pit" of his heart. I'm like, okay. He wasn't pulling my leg.**

JOHN: [Laughter] It is kinda that way. He's a wonderful man. It's just really stressful trying to make a record, keeping a band together—especially for as long as it's been going. I mean, 15 years. That's an amazing thing to keep all that going so yeah, he's gonna be a little different at times.

**SKRATCH: It was just I think also at that time *We're Not Happy...* was coming out, so that was kind of a little bitter time.**

JOHN: That was a stressful time.

**SKRATCH: So, about doing this record, reading the press release, it says basically you're all happy now and it's been good since you're**

**doing your own thing and not with that label [Jive] anymore.**

JOHN: It's been a huge learning process. We put out a live record called *Our Live Album Is Better Than Your Live Album*, and that was like trial-by-fire. We tried to pay for everything—the recording and for all the CDs [which consisted of two CDs and a DVD] to be made and get it out to stores all ourselves and we found out we can't do everything. It's better to have someone that specializes in certain aspects of that, like distribution, getting somebody to pay for making the record and sending it out because we couldn't keep up with the demand. We wouldn't have enough money to have enough records pressed and send them out to the stores and not be in the hole. So we wound up going deeply into the hole. This time we got a distribution deal through Rock Ridge Music and Warner Bros.

**SKRATCH: I alluded to it before, the DVD you have with the record. I know Aaron said before he takes everything seriously and I know you guys inject a lot of humor, but just the process, was it taken more lightly than in the past?**

JOHN: Yeah. All of a sudden there was no outside pressure to make a record. We didn't have to submit demos to a record company like we've had to in the past. Here are these songs and they have to approve them before you start recording and they give you a producer to work with. Fortunately, we've been around long enough and Aaron has gradually started to learn the process. He finally found an engineer he really likes to work with, a studio that is very friendly to us that we recorded in before—it just made things go a lot easier. There wasn't that whole element of stress of working with a new engineer in a really expensive studio that's an hour to drive to



Hollywood from Orange County and record. The recording process was very comfortable for us as compared to the other records, which were sometimes nightmares.

**SKRATCH: Really.**

**JOHN:** Yeah. Aaron isn't the most—you've seen him onstage he's outgoing, extroverted. He is NOT that way. He's the anti-extrovert. He's very introverted when you meet him on a one-on-one basis. So him going out forging relationships with

that everyone goes, "AHHHHHH!" It's really funny because when we play on festivals in England and Europe, a lot of the bands we play with are hardcore bands. So it's something that rubbed off. We did an autograph signing in Nottingham and the guys that signed after us were Dimmu Borgir and we were talking to [them] and they were absolute sweethearts. But the music they play is awesome. But we were right in between those guys. It's hilarious.

**SKRATCH: You always do covers—this one has a little Phil Collins. How do you pick them?**

**JOHN:** It's all Aaron's doing. Aaron is the mighty professor. He told me he was walking in the grocery store and that song came on. We'd just gotten off a tour with Streetlight Manifesto and Westbound Train and he's all, "This would make a great pirate ska song. It would totally be great and you can still get the message of the tune, which is a beautiful tune but get it in

## "THIS IS MY FAVORITE RBF RECORD EVER."



producers was always difficult.

**SKRATCH: Before I mentioned how he got a little deep and thought he was kidding—'cause yeah, I've seen the band live and you think he's totally extroverted—and he was talking to me about being a "sad clown" and stuff.**  
**JOHN:** A sad clown?! [Laughter]

**SKRATCH: That was pretty memorable.**

**JOHN:** That stuff as well is what great music is written out of. Something that stirs that emotional pot inside you gets these songs out. I think this latest record, while that pot is always being stirred, it was [in] a slightly more lighthearted way. He said, "We're really gonna have fun with this record," instead of [angrily] "I have to record this record." It's so stressful. We just went in and, bam, we did it. It came out really wonderful. This is my favorite RBF record ever.

**SKRATCH: The song "Party Down," lampooning all the different scenes, the last I think is death-metal. Is that Aaron [doing the growling vocals]?**

**JOHN:** His death-metal voice is unstoppable.

**SKRATCH: You're playing that song out live, I'm guessing.**

**JOHN:** Yeah. As soon as he starts doing

**SKRATCH: The festivals, are there any other bands that are somewhat in your genre?**

**JOHN:** Definitely not. We played before [Motorhead], and it's all crazy Mastodon, Chimera bands. And we're just like this breath of fresh air of not taking ourselves quite so seriously.

**SKRATCH: How does everyone react?**

**JOHN:** We played a festival in Germany and there were no other bands on our stage that were even remotely like us. They were all hardcore or emo bands and I'm like, "How are they gonna react when we play?", because I'd never experienced it before and the guys were like, "It'll be fine." And when we went out, the crowd went crazy, absolutely mad. I feel very fortunate to play in a band like this where there's a great following and it's just a great live band. You go to have fun. And this is the breath of fresh air everyone needs. They wanna laugh. They don't wanna sit there and cry and slit their wrists all day. [Laughter] Too many people take themselves way too seriously. We're a band that takes ourselves sincerely. I think there's a huge difference between serious and sincere. We have an absolute love and passion for the music, passion for playing in front of audiences. We just like to bring some fun.

half the time so it's not taking an hour-and-a-half for that one song to go by." So he did it.

**SKRATCH: When I heard what the record was gonna be titled *Mokeys for Nothin' and the Chimps for Free* I was laughing out loud. The next time I was at a bar I had to play Dire Straits.**  
[Laughs]

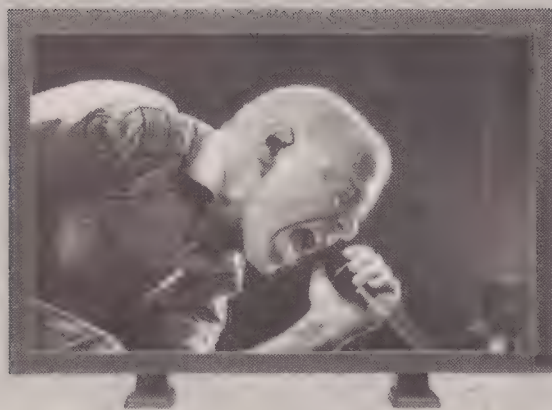
**JOHN:** See, it made you laugh twice. And it's not like we're Weird Al, like we set out to make everybody laugh. We're not just about making fun of everybody in the entire music industry, but we ARE about making fun of everybody in the entire music industry.

**SKRATCH: It seems off-the-cuff, like someone just blurted it out.**

**JOHN:** We have a strange, random sense of humor. It comes from watching too much *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*. Crazy stuff. That's the way we roll... It just seemed right. Like RBF, it just seems right.

John's final message: "Support the bands you love." RBF are on tour till late-August. Check [www.reelbigfish.com](http://www.reelbigfish.com) for more info. To comment on this or any other piece you see in SKRATCH, feel free to e-mail us at [speakup@skratchmagazine.com](mailto:speakup@skratchmagazine.com).





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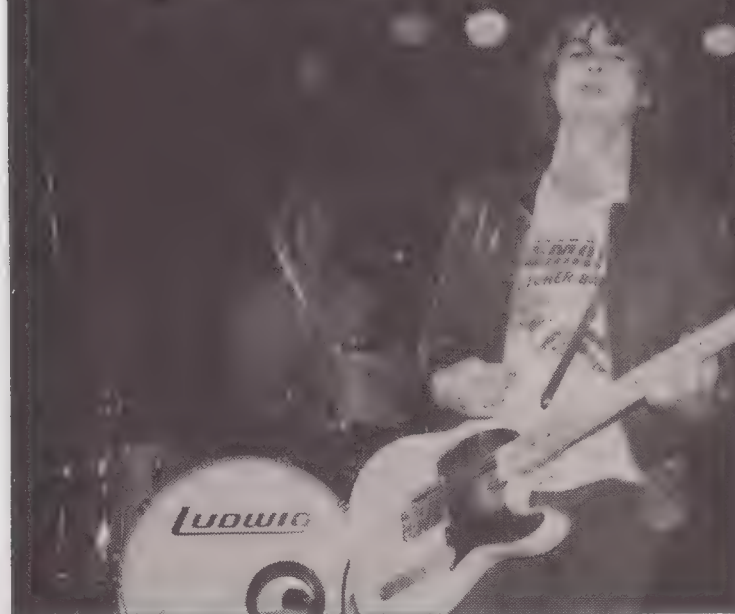






THE JOHNS by Babs





ROONEY pix by jimbo gray



i am ghost

aiden

from autumn to ashes

everybody else

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## A DAY TO REMEMBER FOR THOSE WHO HAVE HEART VICTORY

Typical Victory Records fare these days puts style above substance, and sadly A Day To Remember, decked out in a mix of Angus Young's school uniform, skater fashion and weapons you find underneath a WWE ring, continues the trend. While this Florida-based quintet lay down a competent crunch on cuts like "Monument," much like the nine out of every 10 bands that Victory signs nowadays, sound like a cross between Coheed, Taking Back Sunday and Atreyu. And they actually have the audacity to go ahead and call themselves "pop-mosh," a term sure to haunt them forever. Predictable yet consistent, if you don't have your driver's license yet, this disc is tailor made for you.  
www.victoryrecords.com - Mike SOS

## ASHES ARE NUTRITIOUS FRUSTRATION + SELF-RELEASED

Ashes Are Nutritious are a New Jersey-based quartet whose progressive post hardcore experiments cover a lot of uncovered ground while keeping intensity levels at a fever pitch. On the unit's 11-track presentation produced by Billy Graziadei (Biohazard/ Suicide City), a slew of alternative heaviness is thrust upon your ears in the vein of Tool, Into Another, At the Drive In, Refused, Faith No More and Deftones, complete with multi-faceted vocals, absolutely monstrous bass playing, and a wealth of creative guitar tones and phrasings heading up the attack. It's easy to get lost in the deep grooves of "Genocide" and "Purgatory" thanks to punchy bass and passionate vocal lines delivered with edgy aggression, while "Anxieux" allows a melancholic Staind-esque vibe to be revealed. Ashes Are Nutritious combine nu metal's catchiness, post hardcore's density and hard alternative rock's expansiveness, making FRUSTRATION + a very enlightening and engaging album.  
www.myspace.com/ashesarenutritious -Mike SOS

## BAD RELIGION NEW MAPS OF HELL EPITAPH

Though it was excellent, I don't recall being as excited and blown away on first listen by Bad Religion's last LP, THE EMPIRE STRIKES FIRST, as I was with NEW MAPS OF HELL. Longtime BR fans should be quite pleased, indeed, as MAPS harks back to the mighty SUFFER-AGAINST THE GRAIN-NO CONTROL triumvirate. The punk stalwarts start off the record with the outrageous fast and hard trifecta "52 Seconds," "Heroes & Martyrs" and the literally goosebump-inducing "Germs of Perfection," reminiscent of the pummeling way in which THE PROCESS OF BELIEF commenced. Other highlights all filled to the brim with those trademark "oohs and aahs" and intelligent, insightful, thought-provoking lyrics include "Requiem for Dissent," the midtempo, poignant gem "Honest Goodbye," "Grains of Wrath" ("I don't wanna be in the land known as destitute and free," sings Greg Graffin); the total hardcore "Murder" and the moving "The Grand Delusion" and fitting anthemic closer "Fields of Mars." Sick. -Janelle Jones

## BALANCE PROBLEMS THERE'S LIFE IN THE TREES SELF-RELEASED

Brack Cantrell, who is the lone mastermind behind Balance Problems and guitarist for PlayRadioPlay!, was blessed with a voice that pulls you in and forces you to take notice. It drips of sincerity and emotion, enabling the listener to gain a proper understanding of what Cantrell was going through in each of his stories. He sings hushed lyrics over acoustic guitar delicately blended with soft electronic drums, keyboard, and various background noises to create an undeniably infectious 8-song EP. The songs "Enderly," "Spring Came Early" and "Something About Owls" are definite highlights. Check this out if you like Slowreader, Iron and Wine, or Goodbye Tomorrow's softer stuff. -Josh Eck

## BEAMING HOOVER BEAMINGHOOVER SELF-RELEASED

Beaming Hoover is a primal rock trio from NYC whose self-released five-track endeavor employs a chaotic rock 'n roll spirit heard on such tracks as the Venom meets Godsmack wail of "Coward," but ultimately falls flat into hard rock cliché. While unafraid to strip down to bare essentials, this band's lo-fi approach demonstrates a desperate need of a click track and would totally benefit from a little more seasoning before putting out their next offering to work out these kinks next time around. www.myspace.com/beaminghoover -Mike SOS

## BRICKTOPS/GODDAMMITS SPLIT SELF-RELEASED

Whet your palate for REAL pop-punk (not, sadly it must be asserted, the whiny bullshit being shoved down kids' throats nowadays) with this 12-track split, featuring six songs apiece from Midwest brothers-in-arms Goddammits and Bricktops. Kicking off the alternating-songs-between-bands split are Goddammits, who really hit their stride with the awesome "Nosebleed," the Riverdales-esque (check out the "go!"s) "Marian Go Home" and "Wastin' Time," using a fair amount of cool Screeching Weasel-esque leads along the way. The lone song that's not working is the boring "Won't Get Laid Tonight." Carrying on in the old-school punk-rock landlord-theme tradition ("Slumlord," "Let's Lynch the Landlord"), Bricktops debut with the self-explanatory "Landlord." "Keri Ann," another highlight recalls, at least to this reviewer, Rancid (yo, check that intro), as singer Kevin G's vocals seem a little more Tim-Armstrong-raspy than usual. They end it all nicely with their toughest and meanest, "C.M.F.B." -Janelle Jones

## CEREBRAL CEREBRAL SELF-RELEASED

The Massachusetts-based clan Cerebral take the classic metal route on this two-song sampler. Entrenched in the Megadeth/Trivium mold, the blistering guitars, snarling vocal shrill, and thunderous rhythm section work in unison, whipping up a frenzied metal attack complete with dynamic solos which reek of late '80s thrash meets the clout of NWOBHM: Get ready to embrace this one, traditional metal fans.  
www.cerebralband.com -Mike SOS

## CHIBA-KEN ARE WE INNOCENT? GOTHAM

Chiba-Ken's hodgepodge style fuses many different forms of rock together on the 11-track ARE WE INNOCENT? With a watchful eye on the current wave of metal and hard rock, this Long Island by way of Manhattan-based quintet showcases a vast comprehension of what makes the likes of bands Incubus and Trivium tick, as tracks like "Army Invincible" skillfully blurs the lines between fist-pumping metal and contagious alt rock. Grandiose in both production value and songwriting prowess, Chiba-Ken convincingly demonstrates its love affair with blending heavy riffs, melodic singing and memorable hooks without sounding derivative or falling into clichés, thus establishing its own mark without coming off as a clone. Meshing post-hardcore power with unrefined passion, tracks like "Faster Tonight" patch together the current darlings of modern rock radio's signature sounds, "Legion" provides a nu-metal pate bursting with Deftones, Disturbed and Chevelle-esque goodness, and a secretive pact between Queensryche and Faith No More is revealed on "Prisoner 105." Treading familiar territories with a tricked-out and suped-up all terrain vehicle in tow, ARE WE INNOCENT? exhibits Chiba-ken's brawny and adventurous brain-powered hard rock outpouring.  
www.gothamrecords.com -Mike SOS

## COUNTERSHOCK TOYS SELF-RELEASED

Southern California aggro rockers Countershock play it safe yet sultry on the quartet's 13-track TOYS. Meshing hard rock riffs with powerful female vocals, this outfit borrows from the likes of Godsmack, No Doubt, Disturbed and Velvet Revolver on tracks like "Crown of Thorns" to hammer their attack home. The disc volleys between acoustically-tinged heartbreakers ("In the Dark") to haunting atmospheric rockers ("Voices"), making perfect fodder for modern rock radio to scoop up and play the hell out of. Nothing groundbreaking here, just some meat and potatoes hard rock served straight up for mass appeal.  
www.whoiscountershock.com -Mike SOS

## DAVID GALAS THE CATACLYSM VENDLUS

Distraught and brooding, THE CATACLYSM by David Galas taps the veins of melancholy long enough to render a complete mood alteration. This 19-track affair meets at the crossroads of Isis and Sisters of Mercy on cuts like "The Harvest" and tugs at your black little heartstrings on the bleak acoustic gem "The Fragment." Laying down expansive Goth rock without the cheesiness, this endeavor blends the works of early Floyd, earthy Opeth and the metallic side of darkwave, entrancing the masses while keeping the gloom and doom at a fever pitch. www.vendlus.com -Mike SOS





# ONLY

## DEATHKILLER NEW ENGLAND IS SINKING I SCREAM RECORDS

It's pretty telling when a band can't get its Myspace address because some 18-year-old kid in Oklahoma already took it. You have to surf over to [myspace.com/deathkillers3](http://myspace.com/deathkillers3) to arrive at Deathkiller's page. Beyond their ex-members-of pedigree and a ridiculous-even-for-hardcore band name Deathkiller has little going for it. The mixing on this album is terrible as the different musical elements never meld together and are distractingly distinct. But hey, there is a girl in the band. Too bad progress on gender inclusiveness does not also mean progress musically. -Erika Owens

## DYING FETUS WAR OF ATTRITION RELAPSE

Death metal merchants Dying Fetus hop back to their former selves, leaving trails of carnage in their path with the release of the eight-track WAR OF ATTRITION. Keeping their ballistic brutality razor sharp, groovy and crushing, tracks like "Homicidal Retribution" and the tumultuous tour de force called "Unadulterated Hatred" simply rip through your speakers with measured menacing maliciousness, complete with unearthly vocals, blistering blast beats and blinding riffs that will make your neck ache and your head explode. Bouncing back to true form while stripping down to bare essentials (they're now again a quartet), Dying Fetus demonstrates why they have kept their rank as one of extreme metal's elite outfits on the bombastic WAR OF ATTRITION. Neck brace and physical therapy not included. [www.relapse.com](http://www.relapse.com) -Mike SOS

## EMMURE GOODBYE TO THE GALLOWES VICTORY

Emmure is a volatile East Coast metalcore quintet whose 10 track debut GOODBYE TO THE GALLOWES dexterously meshes numerous strains of heavy together to make their distinctly savage wall of sound. You'll hear bits and pieces of Every Time I Die, Carcass, A Life Once Lost, Bury Your Dead, Meshuggah and Killswitch Engage unified with a tough guy hardcore coating and death metal bravado across this entire disc, tailor-made for the shirtless kids in the pit to collide into by. This 30-minute meal is being haughtily touted as "the heaviest disc of 2007," and while its massive heft does make a significant impact on your cranium, some of the innocuous and formulaic song structures and lyrical content deny them from that lofty title. Nonetheless, these boys crank and have the guts to mix it up with a lot more demonic firepower than your average metalcore clan, earning GOODBYE TO THE GALLOWES some blackened brownie points. Horns up and guard on, Emmure's a band looking to brawl. [www.victoryrecords.com](http://www.victoryrecords.com) -Mike SOS

## EVERDAE LIGHTS OUT AT THE SOUND OF HYSTERIA UPCHUCK

If you close your eyes and listen close, you'd think that Everdae's six-song affair is actually a collection of unreleased Coheed and Cambria tunes, as the likeness between bands is uncanny, right down to the shared vocal style. Yet from the cascading chorus found in "Song in C" to the potent post-hardcore fretwork on "Picture Perfect," LIGHT OUT AT THE SOUND OF HYSTERIA comes across as a emotionally solid, sometimes even spectacular set of songs, despite disappointingly lifting riffs and ideas and leaving no leeway when sounding overall similar to the aforementioned. [www.myspace.com/everdae](http://www.myspace.com/everdae) -Mike SOS

## FAR FROM FINISHED LIVING IN THE FALLOUT THINK FAST RECORDS

This is just plain ole punk rock. I even detect a bit of an British accent, odd coming from New York boys, but it does point to how much they must have internalized all that early punk. "Roses and Razor Blades" is as trite as a song title can get, but it works for Far From Finished. "What kind of punk would I be if I took shit for being me?" Steve Neary croons, "And it's like roses and razor blades / There are scars in this world that are never gonna fade away." Instead of eliciting an exasperated "oh please!" it's simplicity elicits a smile, and apparently a lot of fans. Far From Finished are currently wrapping up a U.S. tour and head to Europe in the fall.

-Erika Owens



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## FREYA LIFT THE CURSE VICTORY

Freya dropped the sing/scream device and let Karl Buechner go at it alone, resulting in the decisively metalcore approach taken on their long awaited second venture, **LIFT THE CURSE**. And if you've ever envisioned what the merger of Hatebreed and Killswitch Engage would sound like, wonder no more, as songs like "Alleviate" and "Suffer Not One" have got you covered. Despite the atrocious for so many reasons "War Pigs" cover, this disc is an admirable offering from a band containing scene vets who have laid the foundation for some of today's hardest and heaviest. [www.victoryrecords.com](http://www.victoryrecords.com) -Mike SOS

## JET LAG GEMINI FIRE THE CANNONS DOGHOUSE RECORDS

Half of Jet Lag Gemini are still in high school and they are already on a label that launched acts like The Get Up Kids and The All-American Rejects. That said, Doghouse also houses plenty of bands few people have ever heard of. Based on this album alone, Jet Lag Gemini are sticking with that unknown territory. But, they are young, and while **FIRE THE CANNONS** is not noteworthy, it's a solid start. Nothing bad, offensive or problematic about it, and "Just Say How" is a strong, rocking track. Jet Lag Gemini knows how to put together a foot-tapping album, a feat on its own. But they'll need to do more than not offend to move away from basic background music. -Erika Owens

## LENG TCH'E MARASMUS RELAPSE

Featuring members of Aborted, Leng Tch'e (an ancient Chinese torture ritual) thrust the power grind and death 'n roll forms into full assault mode on the 17-track **MARASMUS**. This Belgian outfit unleashes a flurry of blinding grind beats, chunky death metal guitar and a slew of gargled-glass vocals guaranteed to get the pit started and the blood splattered everywhere. Check out the slow crawl of "The Divine" and the grueling grind of "1-800-Apathy" and "Social Disgust" for an example of what this extreme outfit can conjure. If you dig the idea of a multi-faceted uni, Leng Tch'e is a band that needs to be heard. [www.relapse.com](http://www.relapse.com) -Mike SOS

## ONSLAUGHT KILLING PEACE CANDLELIGHT

After being on the shelf for nearly 15 years, British thrash titans Onslaught has returned with full force on **KILLING PEACE**. This nine-track release is a thrash-tastic throwback, harkening the days when Testament and Overkill ruled the roost. Sharing similarities with acts like Kreator and Destruction, this quintet dusts off the old tricks and polishes up the old machinery for another neck-snapping go-round on cuts like "Shock 'n Awe" and the Lamb of God-sounding "Burn." Sure to satisfy those that feel the need for speed, Onslaught's righteous thrash metal demonstrates these Brits still have some gas left in the tank. [www.candlelightrecordsusa.com](http://www.candlelightrecordsusa.com) -Mike SOS

## ORTHODOX GRAN PODER SOUTHERN LORD

The first track, "Geryon's Throne," runs over 20 minutes. Doom enough for you? This cloaked unit hailing from Spain demonstrate a lucid understanding of Black Sabbath well enough across the span of the six track **GRAN PODER** to elicit the kind of haunting elements and crushing nuances that all good doom metal provides. And their sludgy cover of Venom's "Genocide" is pretty badass, too. If you like it slow, deep, and hard, add these guys to your shopping list. [www.southernlord.com](http://www.southernlord.com) -Mike SOS

## RUBY BULLET NOTHING LEFT TO BLEED ON VICTORIOUS PIRATE

The NYC duo Ruby Bullet reveal their dark and edgy designwork on their seven-track offering **NOTHING LEFT TO BLEED ON**. Equipped with a strong female vocal and barrage of dramatically-induced hard rock with tons of Goth charm and meaty hooks, cuts like "In My Silence" and "Thorn" conjure up a Evanscence meets Opeth vibe, while the discernibly noisy jazz feel of "What I Know" demonstrates just one of this unit's versatile approaches to their progressive pop concoction. Mixing complex musical nuances with everyday melodies, Ruby Bullet manages to get their musical rocks off at the same time as presenting the listener with solid slabs of well-crafted rock that provide a supple blueprint for every disenchanting female rock fan to follow. [www.rubybullet.com](http://www.rubybullet.com) -Mike SOS

## STRIBORG NEFARIA/A TRAGIC JOURNEY TOWARDS THE LIGHT SOUTHERN LORD

Australian one-man wrecking crew Striborg returns with an assaultive offering in the form of **NEFARIA/A TRAGIC JOURNEY TOWARDS THE LIGHT**, a 16-track disc brimming over with black metal minimalism. No big budget studio tricks and no smoke and mirrors here, folks, just some old school, no-nonsense-bare-bones black metal that fans of everything Norwegian and evil are sure to fawn over. While the second half of this disc is discernibly more lo-fi (it was released 12 years prior after all), the overall effect of the entire collection resonates on cuts such as the bleak "Bleeding Black Tears of Hate" and the eerie acoustic passage "Drowned in Black Beauty", exuding the hopeless abandon it strives to project. [www.southernlord.com](http://www.southernlord.com) -Mike SOS

## SYMPTOM 7 VOL. 1 SAMPLER SELF-RELEASED

Queens, NY rockers Symptom 7 put their love affair with tumultuous riff rock on the map with this three-song sampler. Sharing the same keg cup as Black Label Society, Soundgarden and Alice in Chains, this trio's crunchy guitars, deep in the pocket grooves and clobbering basslines allow songs like "Bound" to shake your soul with finely tuned hard rock shredding. Sturdy, as steel and tight as a drum, Symptom 7's aural assault is best served with a shot of Jack and a Bud chaser. [www.symptom7.com](http://www.symptom7.com) -Mike SOS

## TARGET MARKET NO THRILLS AFTERNOON

Dreamy pop with punk rock pretense best describes this St. Louis quintet who throw in a slew of attention-getting yet slightly underhanded melody lines and accentuate them with horns and strings for emphasis on tracks like "Level Heads" and the title cut. Target Market bridges the gap between My Morning Jacket and Blood Brothers quite well, never shying away from using intriguing instrumentation or experimental vocal lines to hammer their left of center but always deep rooted in rock leanings both on the prairie and to the concrete jungle. **NO THRILLS** is a misnomer of sorts, as this album provides a pretty damn good time if you like your indie rock whip smart and wry. [www.afternoonrecords.com](http://www.afternoonrecords.com) -Mike SOS

## THE ANYWHERE'S THE ANYWHERE'S SELF-RELEASED

Long Island trio The Anywhere's have a everyman quality to their music that truly invites a broad base of fans, as their easygoing melodies and laid back style are reminiscent of bands like Dashboard Confessional, The Fray and Goo Goo Dolls on cuts like "Summer Song" and "D.E.F." The band also knows how to kick it up a notch as noted on the Pearl Jam meets Lenny Kravitz funk rock of "Lube," but it's on "New Tonight" when the band's somber and reflective side shows through and in turn demonstrates the outfit at its best. [www.theanywheres.com](http://www.theanywheres.com) -Mike SOS

## THE DEAD BETTIES NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE CORDLESS/WARNER

Brooklyn's The Dead Betties impress with their second full-length, **NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE**, as the three-piece throw out tons of styles, beginning and ending the record with two completely different-sounding tracks (possibly the two best). "Nightmare Sequence," which is drum-driven dance-punk with sparse guitars and awesomely rhythmic vocals ("So you wanna be groovy but you're a squaaaaare / Don't bother me baby, I will never caaaaaaaare") and the pensive, introspective closer "Non-Ultra," which has a very Sonic-Youth-at-their-sweetest sound and Lee Ranaldo-esque spoken-word vocals. In between the two, we get such highlights as "Malls of the Midwest," a totally aggressive and chaotic number full of manic guitars and impassioned vocals and the urgent politically-minded "George's Mr. Right," laced with fiery shouted chants of "God is talkin' to me, talkin' in my sleep!" Another great is "Hellevator," which in a roundabout way, recalls Conflict's "Someday Soon" æjust much lighter. -Janelle Jones



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# ONLY

## THE HIDDEN HAND THE RESURRECTION OF WHISKEY FOOTE SOUTHERN LORD

The Hidden Hand once again lay down southern fried concrete slabs of stoner rock fury on their third offering, **THE RESURRECTION OF WHISKEY FOOTE**. The 10-track affair finds Wino and company turning up and letting loose with a '70s rock shuffle and a bountiful barrage of bongloaded riffs on cuts such as "Majestic Presence" and "Lightning Hill." Capturing an aged feel without sounding dated, the bluesy swagger and hard rock durability found on "Purple Neon Dream" lasts the entire length of the album, truly giving the listener a pleasurable experience where doom metal's haunt and classic rock's timeless sensibilities collide. Comprising an album laden with a gargantuan sound and an unsurpassed heaviness that few bands can match, The Hidden Hand's latest further etches Wino's place amongst rock's elite while establishes the Maryland trio as a top tier act. [www.southernlord.com](http://www.southernlord.com) -Mike SOS

## THE MAJESTIC TWELVE SCHIZOPHRENOLOGY PANDORA'S LEGACY

Quirky and compelling, the North Carolina-based outfit The Majestic Twelve cover everything from political banter to indie rock fury on the 11-track **SCHIZOPHRENOLOGY**. Sinewy bass lines, howling vocals, clever lyrics and dastardly dynamic dips all play a part in creating a vivid display of a quintet on top of their game. Imagine Dead Kennedys, Talking Heads, Against Me! and Bright Eyes sharing a Sunday brunch somewhere with a stage for an idea of what kind of glorious ear candy you're about to experience upon cranking tracks like "Welcome to the City" and the sardonic and biting "Condoleezza, Check My Posse" through your speakers. Hipsters unite; your new saviors have arrived. [www.themajestictwelve.com](http://www.themajestictwelve.com) -Mike SOS

## THE WHITE BARONS UP ALL NIGHT WITH THE WHITE BARONS GEARHEAD

Featuring the ubiquitous Miss Eva Von Slut on vocals, this quartet play a more prevalent version of gutter punk sprinkled with hard rock on the 11-track **UP ALL NIGHT WITH THE WHITE BARONS**. With Eva's lungs easily rivaling any punk rock dude's pipes and a badass back-up band that can lapse into any permutation of Misfits, The Bronx, AFI, Hookers and Motorhead at a moment's notice, this Bay Area outfit have put forth a high-octane barn burner of an album for the punk rock house party to kick into third gear with raucous cuts like "Mercy, Mercy," "Reckless" and "Never Enough" leading the charge. [www.gearheadrecords.com](http://www.gearheadrecords.com) -Mike SOS

## THE WINTER SOUNDS PORCELAIN EMPIRE LIVEWIRE RECORDINGS

When I put **PORCELAIN EMPIRE** into my CD player, I was immediately attracted to the experience The Winter Sounds provide for their listeners. The initial instrumentation on "Windy City Nights," the opening track of **PORCELAIN EMPIRE**, brings to mind something Bloc Party might write, but as soon as the chorus comes in, The Winter Sounds own it completely. It's infectious and beautiful, and foreshadows perfectly what the rest of the listening experience will be like. Vocalist Patrick Keenan has a unique voice that carries each note with a sense of urgency and the musicianship throughout is nearly flawless. RIYL: Shiny Toy Guns, Bloc Party, The Static Age, et al. -Josh Eck

## THEE MERRY WIDOWS REVENGE SERVED COLD PEOPLE LIKE YOU

All-female psychobilly quintet Thee Merry Widows definitively display the proper swing necessary to set them up top on **REVENGE SERVED COLD**. This ballsy 14-track ode to hot rods, fishnets and pin-up vixens keeps the reverb cranked and the surf/garage rock influence blaring on cuts such as "Cruel Mistress" and "Holy Hack Jack" while sultry vocals keep the boys engrossed on the country fried and zombieified "All of Them Witches." Despite the lack of varied tempos across the span of this disc, Thee Merry Widows do a fine job in demonstrating what a cross between Misfits and Runaways would sound like. [www.themerrywidows.com](http://www.themerrywidows.com) -Mike SOS



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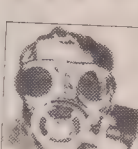
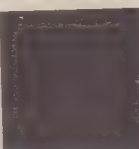
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TOKEN ENTRY





## TO THE MOON TO THE MOON LCAST

Self-described as "edgy melodic dark rock," the quintet To the Moon have proficiently characterized their sound. Playing off a dual solid male/sultry female vocal tandem with a slew of sinewy rhythms that wouldn't sound out of place on a Concrete Blonde or Jeff Buckley release, their eponymous six-pack release is crammed with a bevy of elegant yet hard rocking riffs like the one found on "Rewind." Imagine the stark luxury of Muse meshing with the shadowy melodies and hard rock histrionics employed by Evanescence with dashes of System of a Down's aggressive experimentalism for an inking as to what this New Jersey-based unit is all about. [www.tothemoononline.com](http://www.tothemoononline.com) -Mike SOS

## TOKEN ENTRY THE RE-ISSUES I SCREAM RECORDS

For a real trip back to early punk, check the reissue of two albums from Token Entry, also known as Gilligan's Revenge. Token Entry aren't as hard and fast as you might expect, but they do power through two minute track after two minute track with the snarl and intensity required of a major player in the New York hardcore scene. The liner notes open with a few quotes from members of Gorilla Biscuits, Youth of Today, H2O and The Bouncing Souls detailing their memories of Token Entry and their role in the scene in the '80s. This reissue is an excellent chance for a history lesson and to gain a little inspiration from a lesser known, yet still influential, hardcore band. -Erika Owens

## TRAGIC ORANGE CHRYSLIS SELF-RELEASED

Long Island hard rock quartet Tragic Orange have a ready-for-mass-consumption sound masterfully displayed on the 13-track CHRYSLIS. Combining modern hard rock's dramatics and melodic metal's malaise, songs like "Formula" skillfully whisks through ebbs and flows without losing an ounce of intensity, a staple device used with tremendous success throughout. Grinding riffs like "Gutter Song" collide with the Snot-esque funk of "Get Off," creating a wide spectrum of sounds that shake down the walls, while the top notch rhythm section holds it all down with a fierce undercurrent propelling every snare hit and bass fill but most notably on "Climbing Chaos" and the aggressive yet atmospheric "Pure and Simple." Throw in a singer whose versatile range and sanguine shifting vocal attack goes from blow for blow to beyond and Tragic Orange becomes required listening to anyone that considers themselves a fan of hard rock past 1995. [www.tragicorange.com](http://www.tragicorange.com) -Mike SOS

## TRASHLIGHT VISION ALIBIS AND AMMUNITION ROCK RIDGE

Over-the-top and proud of it, Trashlight Vision immerse the listener in some nicely-crafted, sleazy arena-rock/hardcore punk/'80s-metal informed tunes on ALIBIS AND AMMUNITION. They start out the record with probably the most fun, exaggerated hard rock worthy of any stadium with "Dead Waves on the Air" and keep up the high energy on songs like "I Can't Wait (to Do Nothing)," the psychotic "Faceplant Pavement," the "Jesus Christ Pose"-esque "My Fuck You 2 U," the speedy hardcore-infused "New Junk" and "Horns and Halo's," which during the verses recalls Pennywise's "Bro Hymn." Things are taken down a notch on the alluringly dark "Nola" and the fitting power-ballad finale, "Sick One." Also diggin' the nod to The Ramones, "My Brain Is Hanging Upside Down (Bonzo Goes to Bitburg)." -Janelle Jones

## TURBONEGRO RETOX COOKING VINYL

Turbonegro's latest raunch-fest RETOX, though not quite up to APOCALYPSE DUES' caliber (but what is?!), is a great addition to the Norwegian rockers' ever-growing pantheon. The over-the-top arena-worthy punk-laced-glam-metal-hard-rock (best exemplified on "We're Gonna Drop the Atom Bomb," the driving "Welcome to the Garbage Dump," "No, I'm Alpha Male" and Boys from Nowhere), "racy"/humorous lyrics, and self-evident titles ("Stroke the Shaft," "I Wanna Come," "Hot & Filthy," "You Must Bleed/All Night Long"), are all evident in spades. They end the hellacious 12-track record with perhaps the greatest song: the

wonderfully arrogant near-eight-minute epic "What Is Rock?!" in which the six men proclaim themselves the saviors of rock 'n' roll. Better, though, are the lyrics answering (in a completely serious tone) the title's question, such as "Rock is the possibility of choking on your own vomit in the back of a rapist's van." -Janelle Jones

## UNSANE VISQUEEN IPECAC

Leave it to NYC noise rock merchants Unsane to unleash yet another snarling beast of an album. VISQUEEN is a pummeling 11-track steamroller whose compact bursts of aggression and convincing post-hardcore grit unrepentantly beats the hell out of your speakers. Calculated and sinewy from the opening strains of newly-crowned noise rock anthem "Against the Grain," these guys have only become seethingly angrier as the years pass, as songs like "No One" and "Only Pain" serve up primal sermons of self-loathing whose jarring delivery and jagged lyrics thrust forth with the damn near unstoppable of a derailed freight train. Echoing the virtues of sad blues with a metallic might that keeps an eye on self-taken Polaroids of the East Village circa 1991 and an ear on the nihilism of NYC's underbelly, Unsane's latest release is a weighty affair that cast an ominous shadow on today's metal. [www.ipecac.com](http://www.ipecac.com) -Mike SOS

## VARIOUS ARTISTS MUSIC SAVES LIVES INDEPENDENT MUSIC MEDIA

This 19-track compilation is designed to be given to those that volunteer to give blood through the Music Saves Lives organization. Showcasing an excellent campaign with a veritable list of big name artists from the land of alternative rock lending a hand, folks like New Found Glory, Relient K, Head Automatica and Sugarcult all have pledged a song to assist the program and encourage people to give the gift of life. They've done their part, so now, dear reader, it's up to you. Check out [musicsaveslives.org](http://musicsaveslives.org) for all the info and help stamp out a major problem the medical field faces. [www.musicsaveslives.org](http://www.musicsaveslives.org) -Mike SOS

## VERSUS VERSA DEMO SELF-RELEASED

Starting the record off with a virtual kick in the face, "The Box" hits the ground running and gives a sure indication of the direction this young band's CD is headed in. The vocals are strong and sure—something often lacking in early efforts by new bands—and the instrumentation is top notch, making it an absolute joy to indulge in. The crowd favorite, "Slow Burn," has an incredibly catchy chorus and more of the incredible guitar work—and, perhaps best of all, the last moments of the song are graced with an unexpectedly beautiful outro that I can only wish will be explored a bit more in the future. Nonetheless, Versus Versa is a band that should be checked out ASAP on MySpace or at one of their upcoming local shows. Then you can say you knew them when. -Josh Eck

## WHAT DOESN'T KILL ME WHAT DOESN'T KILL ME SELF-RELEASED

Long Island hardcore punkers What Doesn't Kill Me play as blindingly fast as a grindcore band and vocally (thanks to some blood-curdling metal screams) come off as angry as a pack of wild dogs, so it's no surprise that this totally DIY nine-track affair contains an immense amount of underground charm. Add in a need for speed, a discernible love for chaos and a tip of the hat to the old school non-fashioncore style that propels cuts like "Me Vs. Man" and "Both Feet in the Grave," and you can almost feel the elbows crash into the back of your neck from the uncontrollable pit war. Volatile and visceral, What Doesn't Kill Me delivers an unapologetic kick to the teeth with this eponymous release. [myspace.com/whatdoesntkillme](http://myspace.com/whatdoesntkillme) -Mike SOS

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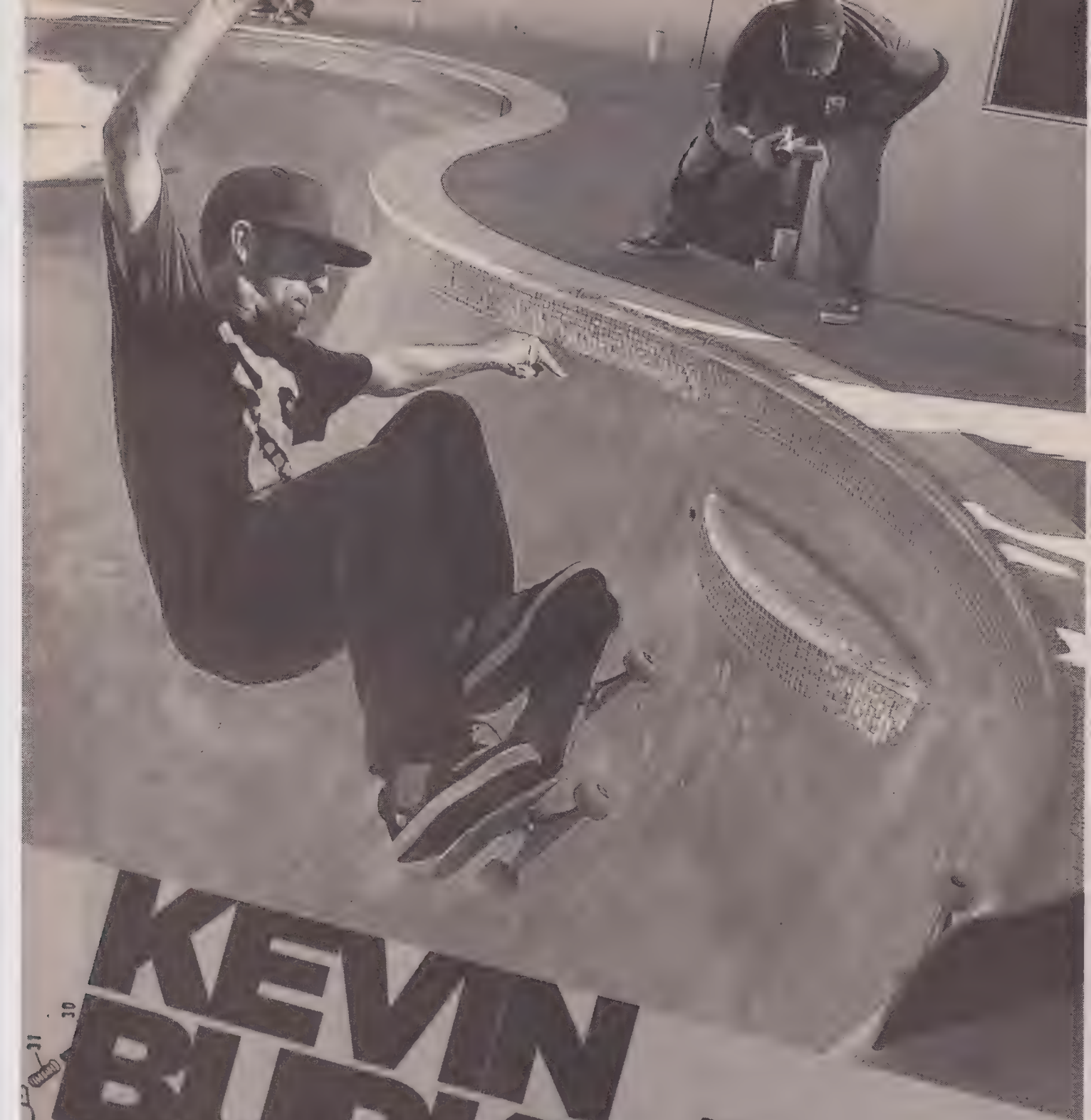
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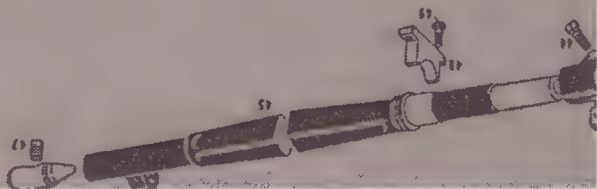




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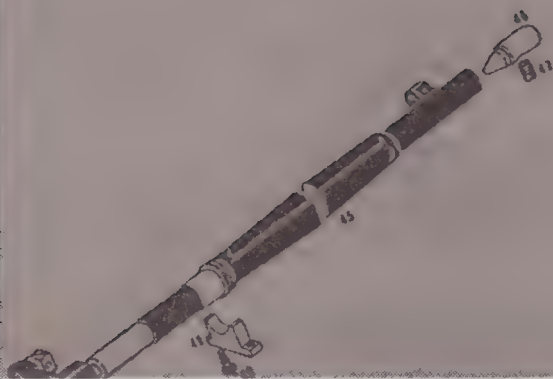
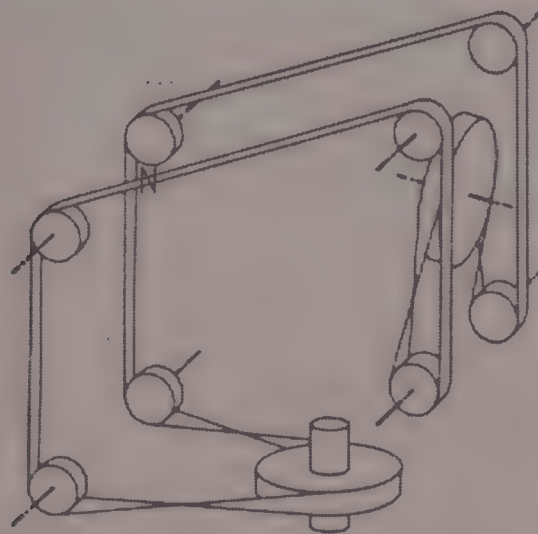




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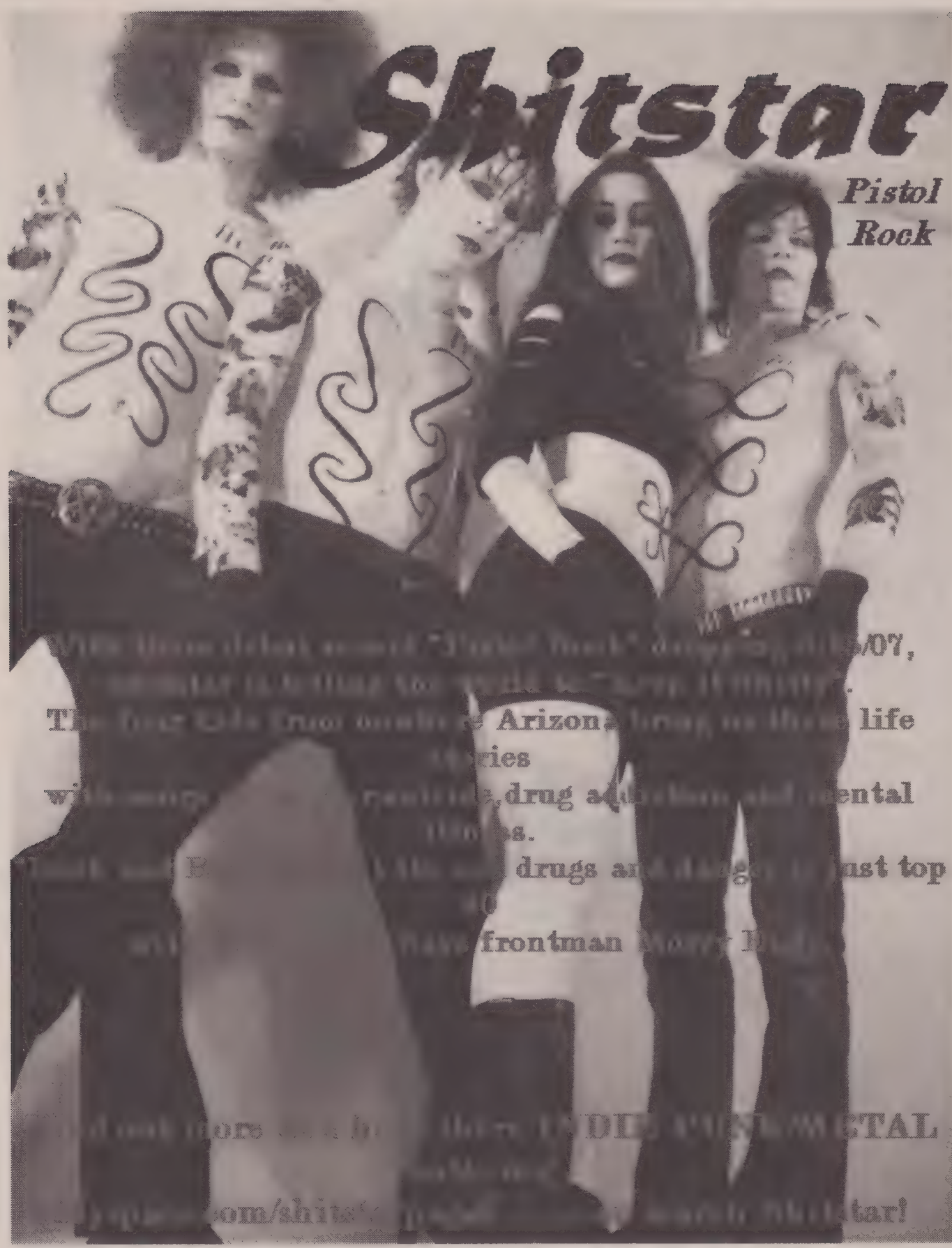






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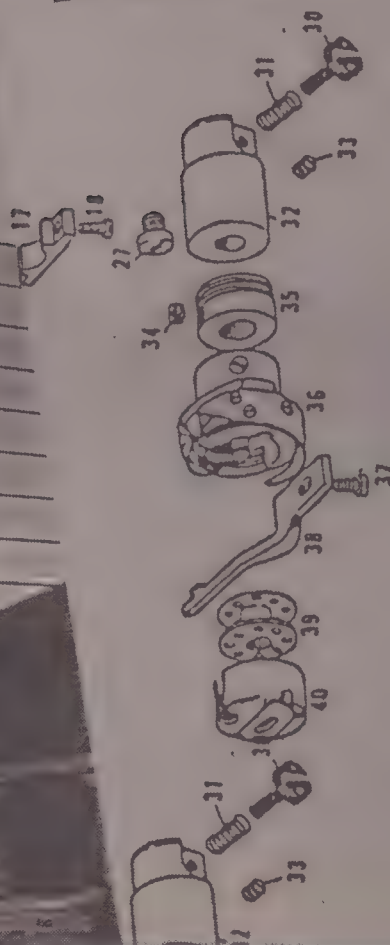




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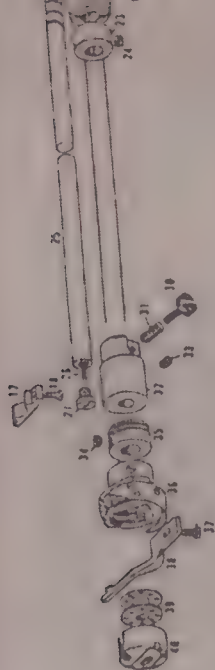


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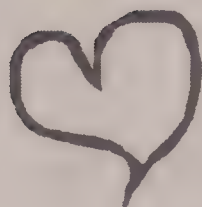
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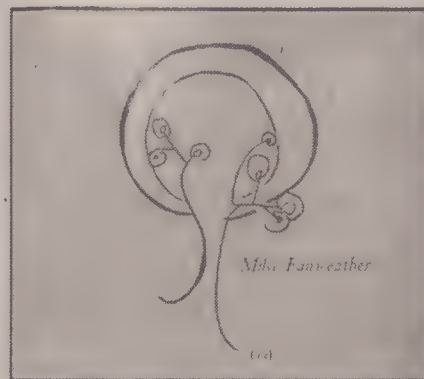
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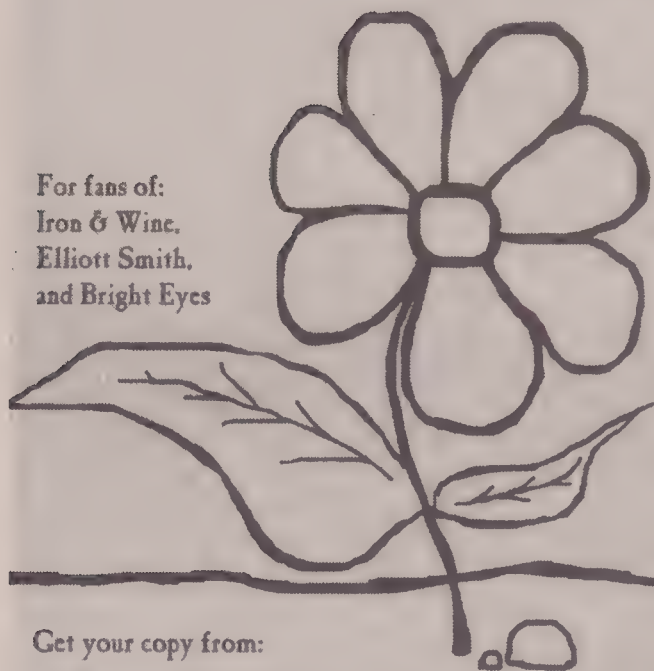
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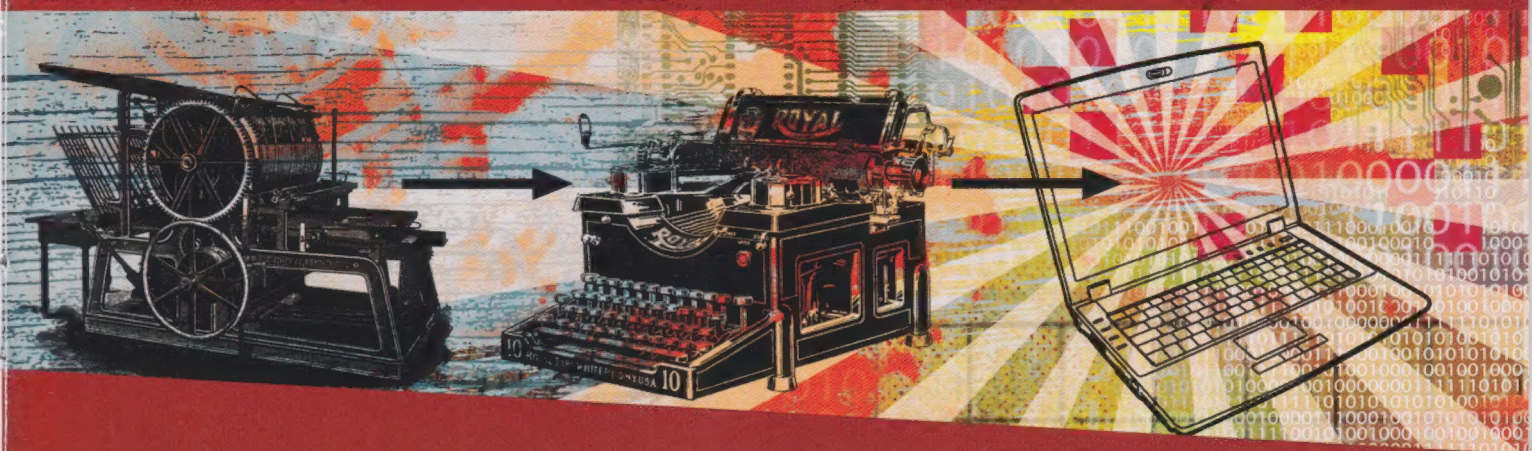
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